



Author(s)	Nielsen, Kenneth E.; Thomson, Robert L.
Title	Strategies for countering terrorist safe havens
Publisher	Monterey, California: Naval Postgraduate School
Issue Date	2013 12
URL	<a href="http://hdl.handle.net/10945/38988">http://hdl.handle.net/10945/38988</a>

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# NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

## THESIS

### STRATEGIES FOR COUNTERING TERRORIST SAFE HAVENS

by

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December 2013

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*Reissued 20 Feb 2014 with adjusted pagination.*

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<b>REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE</b>			<i>Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188</i>	
Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instruction, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704-0188) Washington DC 20503.				
<b>1. AGENCY USE ONLY (Leave blank)</b>		<b>2. REPORT DATE</b> December 2013	<b>3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED</b> Master's Thesis	
<b>4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE</b> STRATEGIES FOR COUNTERING TERRORIST SAFE HAVENS			<b>5. FUNDING NUMBERS</b>	
<b>6. AUTHOR(S)</b> Kenneth E. Nielsen and Robert L. Thomson				
<b>7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)</b> Naval Postgraduate School Monterey, CA 93943-5000			<b>8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER</b>	
<b>9. SPONSORING /MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)</b> N/A			<b>10. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER</b>	
<b>11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES</b> The views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of Defense or the U.S. Government. IRB protocol number ____N/A____.				
<b>12a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT</b> Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited			<b>12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE</b> A	
<b>13. ABSTRACT (maximum 250 words)</b> <p>More than a decade after the attacks on 9/11, United States leadership continues to place a high priority on pursuing terrorists and denying them safe havens from which they can recruit, train, and plan operations. In a time of decreasing budgets and growing sentiment avidly against involvement in prolonged wars, the U.S. must adapt strategies to meet the future threats posed by terrorist safe havens.</p> <p>This thesis offers strategies for countering safe havens. It begins by arguing that safe havens are not just geographic areas, but that they also include a demographic component that allows terrorists a population among which to hide. The thesis then presents four strategies aimed at denying geographic and demographic safe havens: leadership targeting within safe havens, tactical containment, pseudo operations, and surrogate security forces. The thesis draws from four historical case studies to examine these strategies, including the Peruvian government's efforts to combat the Shining Path, French containment of the Casbah in Algeria's war of independence, Rhodesia's Selous Scouts' experience with pseudo operations, and U.S. co-option of the Sons of Iraq in Anbar Province.</p> <p>The thesis finds that no single strategy is sufficient for dealing with geographic and demographic safe havens. Rather, a combination of strategies, properly sequenced, can reduce terrorist safe havens. Furthermore, none of these strategies works without counterinsurgency forces positively engaging the population, setting the necessary conditions for separating insurgents from their demographic and geographic supports.</p>				
<b>14. SUBJECT TERMS</b> Safe havens, counterinsurgency, demographics, Shining Path, Sendero Luminoso, Peru, Algiers, FLN, Rhodesia, Selous Scouts, Anbar, Sons of Iraq, SOI, leadership targeting, decapitation, containment, pseudo operations, co-opting, surrogate security forces, insurgency.			<b>15. NUMBER OF PAGES</b> 121	
			<b>16. PRICE CODE</b>	
<b>17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT</b> Unclassified	<b>18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE</b> Unclassified	<b>19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT</b> Unclassified	<b>20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT</b> UU	

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**MASTER OF SCIENCE IN DEFENSE ANALYSIS**

from the

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## **ABSTRACT**

More than a decade after the attacks on 9/11, United States leadership continues to place a high priority on pursuing terrorists and denying them safe havens from which they can recruit, train, and plan operations. In a time of decreasing budgets and growing sentiment avidly against involvement in prolonged wars, the U.S. must adapt strategies to meet the future threats posed by terrorist safe havens.

This thesis offers strategies for countering safe havens. It begins by arguing that safe havens are not just geographic areas, but that they also include a demographic component that allows terrorists a population among which to hide. The thesis then presents four strategies aimed at denying geographic and demographic safe havens: leadership targeting within safe havens, tactical containment, pseudo operations, and surrogate security forces. The thesis draws from four historical case studies to examine these strategies, including the Peruvian government's efforts to combat the Shining Path, French containment of the Casbah in Algeria's war of independence, Rhodesia's Selous Scouts' experience with pseudo operations, and U.S. co-option of the Sons of Iraq in Anbar Province.

The thesis finds that no single strategy is sufficient for dealing with geographic and demographic safe havens. Rather, a combination of strategies, properly sequenced, can reduce terrorist safe havens. Furthermore, none of these strategies works without counterinsurgency forces positively engaging the population, setting the necessary conditions for separating insurgents from their demographic and geographic supports.



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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>I.</b>	<b>TERRORIST SAFE HAVENS .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>A.</b>	<b>PURPOSE OF STUDY.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>B.</b>	<b>RESEARCH QUESTION .....</b>	<b>2</b>
1.	Decapitation/Leadership Targeting .....	2
2.	Containment .....	3
3.	Surrogate Security Forces.....	3
4.	Pseudo Operations .....	3
<b>C.</b>	<b>ARGUMENT.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>D.</b>	<b>METHODOLOGY .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>II.</b>	<b>SAFE HAVENS AND COUNTERSTRATEGIES .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>A.</b>	<b>SAFE HAVENS.....</b>	<b>7</b>
1.	Literature on Safe Havens.....	7
<b>B.</b>	<b>STRATEGIES FOR COUNTERING SAFE HAVENS .....</b>	<b>17</b>
1.	Decapitation/Leadership Targeting .....	18
2.	Containment .....	21
3.	Co-opting Surrogate Security Forces.....	23
4.	Pseudo Operations .....	26
<b>C.</b>	<b>CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>III.</b>	<b>DECAPITATION: A LEADERLESS VICTORY.....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>A.</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>B.</b>	<b>THE SHINING PATH: PERU’S INSURGENCY .....</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>C.</b>	<b>GUZMAN’S CHARISMATIC LEADERSHIP .....</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>D.</b>	<b>AFTER AYACUCHO .....</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>E.</b>	<b>THE GOVERNMENT’S COUNTER STRATEGY FROM THE TOP DOWN.....</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>F.</b>	<b>CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>IV.</b>	<b>CONTAINMENT IN ALGIERS: CONTROLLING THE OUTPUT .....</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>A.</b>	<b>GEOGRAPHY AND FRENCH COLONIALIZATION.....</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>B.</b>	<b>INSURGENCY.....</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>C.</b>	<b>COUNTERINSURGENCY.....</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>D.</b>	<b>CONCLUSION AND ANALYSIS.....</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>V.</b>	<b>PSEUDO OPERATIONS IN RHODESIA .....</b>	<b>63</b>
<b>A.</b>	<b>THE HISTORY OF PSEUDO TEAMS.....</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>B.</b>	<b>THE RHODESIAN CIVIL WAR.....</b>	<b>65</b>
<b>C.</b>	<b>SELOUS SCOUTS ARE BORN.....</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>D.</b>	<b>“TERRORIZING THE TERRORIST”.....</b>	<b>70</b>
<b>E.</b>	<b>STRENGTHS AND LIMITS OF PSEUDO OPERATIONS.....</b>	<b>75</b>
<b>VI.</b>	<b>SONS OF IRAQ .....</b>	<b>79</b>
<b>A.</b>	<b>SUNNIS IN IRAQ’S ANBAR PROVINCE.....</b>	<b>80</b>
<b>B.</b>	<b>THE RISE OF AL QAEDA IN IRAQ .....</b>	<b>83</b>

C.	THE CREATION OF THE SONS OF IRAQ .....	87
D.	STRENGTHS AND LIMITS OF THE SURROGATE APPROACH.....	89
VII.	CONCLUSION .....	93
A.	KEY FINDINGS .....	94
B.	IMPLICATIONS FOR USSOF .....	97
	LIST OF REFERENCES .....	103
	INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST .....	109

## LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ALN	Army of National Liberation
AQ	Al-Qa'ida
AQI	Al Qaeda in Iraq
AQIM	al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb
CDC	civil defense committees
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
COIN	counterinsurgency
COMOPS	combined operations
CPA	Coalition Provisional Authority
CT	counterterrorism
DOD	Department of Defense
DOS	Department of State
ELN	National Liberation Army
FARC	Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia
FATA	federally administered tribal areas
FBI	Federal Bureau Investigation
FID	Foreign Internal Defense
FLN	National Liberation Front
FRELIMO	Mozambique Liberation Front
FY	fiscal year
GAO	Government Accountability Office
GEIN	Grupo Especial de Inteligencia (Special Intelligence Group)
GOI	government of Iraq
GWOT	Global War on Terror
HUMINT	human intelligence
IICT	Interagency Intelligence Community on Terrorism
IRTPA	Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act
ISI	Islamic State of Iraq
JCET	Joint Combined Exercise Training
LTC	lieutenant commander

MOJWA	Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa
MUJAO	Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa
NCO	non-commissioned officer
NDAA	National Defense Authorization Act
NGO	nongovernmental organization
NSS	National Security Strategy
ODA	Operational Detachment-Alpha
PC	popular committee
QDRP	Quadrennial Defense Review Report
SAS	special air service
SDECE	Service de Documentation Extérieure et de Contre-Espionnage
SOI	Sons of Iraq
UDI	Unilateral Declaration of Independence
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
USSOCOM	United States Special Operations Command
USSOF	United States Special Operations Forces
USSF	United States Special Forces
WMD	weapons of mass destruction
ZANLA	Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army
ZANU	Zimbabwe African National Union
ZAPU	Zimbabwe African Peoples Union
ZIPRA	Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army

## **I. TERRORIST SAFE HAVENS**

Though not a new tactic, the concept of terror groups establishing safe haven or sanctuary in a particular location has been in the spotlight this past decade in multiple global conflicts. According to the President of the United States in the 2010 *U.S. National Security Strategy* (NSS), the U.S. will “Deny Safe Havens and Strengthen At-Risk States: Wherever al-Qa’ida or its terrorist affiliates attempt to establish a safe haven—as they have in Yemen, Somalia, the Maghreb, and the Sahel—we will meet them with growing pressure.”<sup>1</sup> This emphasis on the denial of terrorist safe havens was initially put forth as a recommendation from the *9/11 Commission Report* stating:

The U.S. government must identify and prioritize actual or potential terrorist sanctuaries. For each, it should have a realistic strategy to keep possible terrorists insecure and on the run, using all elements of national power. We should reach out, listen to, and work with other countries that can help.<sup>2</sup>

Why have these safe havens flourished since 9/11? Does the United States actually have a strategy to counter terrorist safe havens? More than a decade after the attacks on 9/11, our country’s leadership continues to place a high priority on pursuing terrorist networks and denying locations that provide them sanctuary, but a definitive strategy specifically targeting safe havens is still wanting.

### **A. PURPOSE OF STUDY**

The purpose of this study is to identify possible strategies that can be employed to combat terrorist safe havens. The United States has withdrawn from Iraq and is in the process of withdrawing from Afghanistan; U.S. strategy therefore is transitioning from large conventional force invasions to achieve policy objectives to a light footprint and indirect approach to conflicts. Given the frequently utilized, but often ambiguous, terminology of safe havens, the study will first define and determine what a safe haven is

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<sup>1</sup> White House, *National Security Strategy* (Washington, DC: White House, 2010), 21.

<sup>2</sup> National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States, *The 9/11 Commission Report*, 2004, 377, <http://www.9-11commission.gov/report/911Report.pdf>.

in order to establish a common ground and understanding of the terminology. Furthermore, current literature typically focuses on terrorist safe havens as merely a geographic and governance problem. This study, however, will emphasize a missing dimension of studies on safe havens—demographic factors, such as tribal identity, ethnicity, race, and religion. It is our contention that understanding how demographic factors create terrorist safe havens is critical for developing an effective counter strategy.

Analyzing the puzzle that safe havens present will assist leaders in strategizing and resourcing appropriate forces to counter them. As history has shown there is no silver bullet to denying and disrupting terrorist safe havens; however, history provides a perspective that can be used to navigate this complex problem. The arduous task is learning from history and adapting strategies to meet the challenges faced by terrorist safe havens. Countering this threat will be an integral component of U.S. national security as well as the safety of our international partners.

## **B. RESEARCH QUESTION**

What are the conditions that create safe havens for terrorists? What are the current options for countering safe havens? What strategy should U.S. Special Operations Forces (USSOF) use against terrorist safe havens in particular?

To address these questions, this thesis will investigate four strategies for countering safe havens:

### **1. Decapitation/Leadership Targeting**

Decapitation strategy focuses on targeting terrorist leadership. Safe havens provide ideal climates in which to recruit, train and organize terrorist groups, but they also prevent a vulnerability, namely that leaders often collect in safe havens and, if identified, can become ready targets. Lethal targeting of operational leaders and support leaders can have devastating effects on centralized organizations.

## **2. Containment**

Containment seeks to capitalize on geographic safe havens by physically quarantining specific areas in which terrorists reside and isolating terror groups from resources to include personnel, weapons, finances, and equipment. This strategy has the goal of quarantining and then dismantling terrorist groups. This strategy is typically geographically dependent.

## **3. Surrogate Security Forces**

This strategy aims to incentivize key stakeholders in demographic and geographic safe havens while also threatening those that are not supportive of the policy objective. This strategy has been employed at the micro-level to secure population centers and at the state level to maintain peace. Effectively engaging the human terrain is paramount in the success of this strategy.

## **4. Pseudo Operations**

Pseudo operations have been employed to sow distrust within networks and to provide intelligence in demographic safe havens in order to assist in both lethal and non-lethal targeting. This strategy focuses on destroying a network from within and destroying the group's operational capacity.

## **C. ARGUMENT**

This thesis argues that the four strategies presented above—leadership targeting, containment, surrogate forces and pseudo operations—provide viable potential options for USSOF to counter the complex problem of safe havens. Overall, the case studies will demonstrate that each strategy has had tactical success in the short term, but will most likely lack long-term sustainment. Therefore, based on the analysis presented, this thesis will argue that the best strategy should be a combination and sequencing of these four approaches, with each approach mutually supporting the others.

Overall, our analysis proposes that in each case, the strengths of an insurgency and the foundation for a successful safe haven reside in popular support. Likewise, the



cases will demonstrate that the importance of winning the population's support is a critical variable for long-term success in countering terrorist safe havens. To have enduring success countering terrorist safe havens, the host nation needs to address underlying causes or grievances that instigated the insurgent movement and led the population to provide sanctuary.

#### **D. METHODOLOGY**

This study will analyze strategies to counter terrorist safe havens based on a comparison of historical case studies. Specifically, it will process trace four case studies, each corresponding to one of the counter-strategies analyzed in this thesis. For decapitation, the thesis will investigate the conditions that led up to the capture of Abimael Guzman, the leader of the Shining Path in Peru. The containment strategy will be elucidated by an analysis of French counterinsurgency operations in Algeria, specifically the battle of Algiers. The strategy exploring the use of pseudo operations focuses on destroying a network from within—and thus its operational capacity—through the lens of the Selous Scouts in Rhodesia. The final case study will examine the Sons of Iraq and the strategy of incentivizing the local populace to create an environment that is unfavorable to terrorist organizations and that will limit the need for occupying forces to maintain a presence and security within the selected area.

The thesis will then offer a comparison of the cases, analyzing potential strengths and limits of each approach for U.S. policy. This comparison will help identify critical variables that govern the crafting of a strategy to provide a valuable analysis for future operations targeting terrorist safe havens.

The thesis proceeds as follows. Chapter II provides an overview of the literature on safe havens, noting the absence of a critical variable—demography, and the role it plays in sheltering terrorists and providing a base from which to operate. The chapter also presents four strategies for countering safe havens: decapitation, containment, pseudo operations, and surrogate forces.

Chapter III takes an in-depth look at the Peruvian insurgency known as the Shining Path, or Sendero Luminoso. The case looks at the insurgency's utilization of the

rural population and absence of governmental control to create a sanctuary within the country's hinterlands that allowed for recruiting and the Shining Path's expansion of control. Once established, the organization attempted to transition its operations from the rural to the populated urban areas. However, heavy handedness against the population destroyed the Shining Path's safe haven, allowing the government to successfully target the insurgency's leadership and eventually capture Guzman.

Chapter IV examines the benefits and drawbacks of a tactical containment strategy. The study looks at the French fight to maintain their colonial security within the Northern African country of Algeria. Specifically, the case focuses on the conflict between French forces and the group known as the National Liberation Front (FLN), and specifically on the French military's quarantine of the demographic area of the Casbah located in Algiers, the nation's capital. Though initially spread throughout the country, the conflict peaked when the FLN attempted to unify and condense their support within specific Arab neighborhoods in Algiers, including the Casbah. This concentration of insurgents allowed French Special Operation Forces to physically surround this neighborhood and destroy the insurgents from within.

The third case, in Chapter V, takes an in-depth look at pseudo operations as a means of countering demographic safe havens. The use of pseudo operations to combat a terrorist safe haven was employed during the Rhodesian Civil War in the mid-1960s when local insurgents attempted to sever ties with Britain. The use of pseudo operations focused on the ability to sow distrust within the terrorist organization through "flipped" indigenous forces, operating as spies and assassins from within insurgent groups. These forces then allowed allied forces gain greater intelligence, increase terrorist fratricide and confusion, and focus operations against specific targets of opportunity within insurgent groups.

Chapter VI analyzes the effectiveness of co-opting local surrogate forces in order to maintain security within a particular region. This strategy is viewed through the lens of the program known as the Sons of Iraq (SOI), which was created in 2007. In Iraq, the program aimed to help incentivize key stakeholders while simultaneously threatening those that may be attempting to destabilize the area and create an environment that

promotes a safe haven for terrorist activity. Finally, this thesis provides summary findings in its concluding chapter. Here, we will discuss the costs and benefits of each strategy against a particular type of safe haven. Additionally, we will submit that the strategic focus of a country to deny safe havens needs to have a long-term method of sustainment. This means that one strategy alone most likely will not fit all safe havens and that properly sequencing these strategies or combining them is the best approach to countering safe havens. Ultimately, safe havens cannot be defeated without governments addressing the needs and vulnerabilities of their populations.

## **II. SAFE HAVENS AND COUNTERSTRATEGIES**

### **A. SAFE HAVENS**

Terrorist safe havens have developed in Pakistan, Syria, Iraq, North Africa, the Horn of Africa and Arabian Peninsula. With the bulk of military and foreign aid focusing on Afghanistan, these safe havens have thrived and present a credible threat to the U.S. homeland, its allies, and interests abroad. In a time of decreasing budgets and U.S. popular sentiment avidly against prolonged wars, as seen by Afghanistan and Iraq, the United States must adapt a strategy to meet the future threats of terrorist safe havens. Disrupting and denying terrorist safe havens around the world can be achieved, but at what cost and through what strategy? To answer this question we first must define what a terrorist safe haven is and understand the variables that currently exist within safe havens.

This chapter begins by reviewing the literature on safe havens. It finds a critical gap—the absence of demography as an important variable, alongside physical space. This thesis argues, therefore, that safe havens have two distinct variables: geography and demography. Both present distinct challenges to the counter-terrorism efforts and strategist must factor in these variables. Then this chapter presents four strategies for countering safe havens: decapitation or leadership targeting; containment; carrots and sticks; and pseudo operations. These four strategies will be developed in this chapter and then used to investigate the subsequent case studies.

#### **1. Literature on Safe Havens**

The Department of State (DOS) annually produces a document entitled, “Country Reports on Terrorism.” In 2012, the DOS report identified 12 terrorist safe havens worldwide.<sup>3</sup> The DOS classifies their identified safe havens to “include ungoverned, under-governed, or ill-governed physical areas where terrorists are able to organize, plan,

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<sup>3</sup> Department of State [DOS], *Country Reports on Terrorism 2012* (Washington, DC: Bureau of Counterterrorism, May 2013), 180.

raise funds, communicate, recruit, train, transit, and operate in relative security because of inadequate governance capacity, political will, or both.<sup>4</sup> The list of recognized safe havens is comprised of:

#### AFRICA

- Somalia: “In 2012, many areas of Somalia remained a safe haven for terrorists, although the “Country Reports on Terrorism” names fewer areas than in 2011. Most notably, governmental forces gained control of the port city of Kismayo on September 28, which was previously held by the terrorist organization Al-Shabaab.”<sup>5</sup>
- The Trans-Sahara: “The primary terrorist threat in this region was al-Qa’ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM).”<sup>6</sup>
- Mali: “In 2012, the Tuareg Rebellion, led primarily by the nomadic Tuareg people, aided mercenary fighters and arms proliferation [traffickers] stemming from the Libyan Revolution, was [sic] followed by the arrival of violent extremist and terrorist groups such as al-Qa’ida in the Islamic Maghreb and the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO), in northern Mali. The rebel groups, aided by violent extremists in some cases, took advantage of the political chaos in Bamako following the March 2012 coup d’état to capture northern towns and cities and effectively gain control over northern Mali.”<sup>7</sup>

#### SOUTHEAST ASIA

- The Sulu/Sulawesi Seas Littoral: “The numerous islands in the Sulawesi Sea and the Sulu Archipelago [which include the countries of Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines] make it a difficult region for authorities to monitor. A range of licit and illicit activities, including worker migration, tourism, and trade pose additional challenges to identifying and countering the terrorist threat in that region.”<sup>8</sup>
- The Southern Philippines: “The geographical composition of the Philippines, spread out over 7,100 islands, has made it difficult for the central government to maintain a presence in all areas. Counterterrorism

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 205.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 205–206.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

operations over the past 10 years, however, have been successful at isolating and constraining the activities of domestic and transnational terrorists.”<sup>9</sup>

## MIDDLE EAST

- Iraq: “While the level of counterterrorism pressure exerted by security forces varied by region in 2012, the central government took strong action to eliminate terrorist safe havens, maintained close counterterrorism cooperation with the United States, and made progress in preventing the proliferation and trafficking of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) both within and across its borders.”<sup>10</sup>
- Lebanon: “The Lebanese government does not exercise complete control over all regions in the country or its borders with Syria and Israel. In 2012, Hizballah militias continued to control access to parts of the country, limiting access by Lebanon’s security services, including the police and army, which allowed terrorists to operate in these areas with relative impunity.”<sup>11</sup>
- Libya: “In 2012, Libyan internal security suffered significant challenges and setbacks as it sought to reassert central authority following the fall of the Qadhafi regime. Attempts were made to strengthen overall counterterrorism and border capabilities to mitigate the various threats; however, the Libyan government had serious difficulty in asserting control over portions of the country and adequately manning border posts, particularly in the east and south, resulting in significant levels of known terrorist transit through the country.”<sup>12</sup>
- Yemen: “The Government of Yemen, under President Abdo Rabbo Mansour Hadi, remained a strong partner of the United States on counterterrorism issues in 2012. The Yemeni government relied on pro-government tribal militias known as Popular Committees (PCs) to secure the area after the military sweep. [Nevertheless, Yemen remains an area of primary concern for its safe havens and harboring of Al-Qa’ida (AQ) in the Arabian Peninsula.]<sup>13</sup>

## SOUTH ASIA

- Afghanistan: “AQ has some freedom of movement in Kunar and Nuristan provinces largely due to a lack of Afghan National Security Forces

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 207.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 208.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

capacity to control certain border territories in north and east Afghanistan.”<sup>14</sup>

- Pakistan: “Portions of Pakistan’s Federally Administered Tribal Areas, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, and Balochistan remained a safe haven for terrorist groups seeking to conduct domestic, regional, and global attacks. AQ, the Haqqani Network, the Afghan Taliban, Lashkar e-Tayyiba, and other groups exploited the inability of Pakistan’s security agencies to fully control portions of its own territory to find refuge and plan operations.”<sup>15</sup>

#### WESTERN HEMISPHERE

- Columbia: “Colombia’s borders with Venezuela, Ecuador, Peru, Panama, and Brazil include rough terrain and dense forest cover. Coupled with low population densities and historically weak governments has allowed for potential safe havens for insurgent and terrorist groups, particularly the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the National Liberation Army (ELN).”<sup>16</sup>
- Venezuela: “The FARC and ELN reportedly continued to use Venezuelan territory in 2012 to rest and regroup, engage in narcotics trafficking, extort protection money, and kidnap Venezuelans to finance their operations. Throughout the year, the Governments of Venezuela and Colombia continued a dialogue on security and border issues.”<sup>17</sup>

The 2012 DoS report underscores that terrorist safe havens are not confined to one country or region, but rather span the globe and are the result of multiple factors, including climate, vegetation, governance, and populations. This observation requires further refinement on the definition of a safe have and the conditions under which they are formed.

One definition of ‘Safe Havens’ was presented in the spring of 2009 by the Interagency Intelligence Community on Terrorism (IICT) and was used in Joseph Celeski’s work entitled, *Hunter-Killer Teams: Attacking Enemy Safe Havens*. Celeski’s definition, which will be utilized as a reference point throughout the study, defines safe havens as:

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 209.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 210.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

an area where terrorists are able to gather in relative security and in sufficient numbers to engage in activities that constitute a threat to U.S. national security. Such activities include attack preparations, training, fundraising, and recruitment often conducted in unsecured or under governed geographic areas.<sup>18</sup>

Multiple authors utilize the word ‘sanctuary’ interchangeably with “safe haven.” As Michael Innes notes in his book, *Denial of Sanctuary: Understanding Terrorist Safe Havens*:

Sanctuary is given a broad and ill-defined territorial meaning that categorizes terrorist spaces as homogenous, following the “they are either with us or against us” viewpoint.... Military actions against chunks of territory, even whole countries, which are deemed terrorist sanctuaries will have an unavoidable air of imperialism .... If we are not careful with delimiting the geography of terrorist sanctuary, and allow it to be seen as a territorial expression rather than one of nodes in a network, whole populations can be seen as “complicit” in providing sanctuary to terrorists.<sup>19</sup>

Given this distinction, this thesis will use the term safe haven because it allows for greater disparity, or combination, of the roles that both geography and demography play in the influence of areas utilized by identified terrorist organizations.

When attempting to counter a safe haven, it is beneficial not only to address the locations but also “reveal the benefits that terrorists derive from them, including lack of governmental interference, inaccessibility to those hunting them, and an environment that allows systematic and patient training.”<sup>20</sup> Terrorist groups have sought safe havens that provide several benefits. One of the most critical assets of a safe haven is the ability of groups to plan and train for the execution of terrorist attacks with limited prospects of governmental interference. This freedom of maneuver within a safe haven is imperative if a terror group wants to train and grow a cadre of operatives whom they can effectively employ either domestically or abroad.

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<sup>18</sup> Joseph D. Celeski, *Hunter-Killer Teams: Attacking Enemy Safe Haven* (Joint Special Operations University [JSOU] Report 10-1), (Hurlburt Field, FL: JSOU, 2010), 20.

<sup>19</sup> Michael A. Innes, *Denial of Sanctuary: Understanding Terrorist Safe Havens* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2007), 47.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., vii.



More importantly, safe havens provide the group with a sense of territory and self-governance that lends credibility to the group, which can be very effective in recruiting efforts. The 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review Report (QDRP), produced by the Department of Defense (DOD), states that, “[t]errorist groups seek to evade security forces by exploiting ungoverned and under governed areas as safe havens from which to recruit, indoctrinate, and train fighters, as well as to plan attacks on U.S. and allied interests.”<sup>21</sup>

*Ungoverned Territories: Understanding and Reducing Terrorism Risks* by Angel Rabasa, Steven Boraz, Peter Chalk and Kim Cragin, defines ungoverned territory:

both with respect to physical space and to the level of state control, the degree to which the state has control of normal government functions. Ungoverned territories can be failed or failing states; poorly controlled land or maritime borders or airspace; or areas within otherwise viable states where the central government’s authority does not extend. Ungoverned territories can thus be found along a continuum of state control.<sup>22</sup>

Author Michael Innes breaks down the understanding of “ungoverned spaces” into two distinct categories: Physical Ungoverned Spaces—those hinterlands beyond the effective reach of a weak state—and Nonphysical Ungoverned Spaces—domains within a state where the government is unable or unwilling to exercise authority.<sup>23</sup> A great example of these “nonphysical ungoverned spaces” can be found in the work of Anne Clunan and Harold Trinkunas entitled, *Ungoverned Spaces*.<sup>24</sup> The authors state that these areas:

Include political entities such as intergovernmental organizations and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) or terrorist networks, and economic ones such as major corporations or transnational criminal enterprises.... In addition, it [this broader concept of ungoverned spaces] highlights the growing importance of virtual realms: politically as

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<sup>21</sup> Department of Defense [DoD]. *2010 Quadrennial Defense Review Report* (Washington, DC: Office of the Secretary of Defense, 2010), 27.

<sup>22</sup> Angel Rabasa et al., *Ungoverned Territories: Understanding and Reducing Terrorism Risks* (MG-561-AF) (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2007), 1.

<sup>23</sup> Innes, *Denial of Sanctuary*, 69.

<sup>24</sup> Anne L. Clunan and Harold A. Trinkunas, *Ungoverned Spaces: Alternatives to State Authority in an Era of Softened Sovereignty* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010), 7.

channels for terrorists, social movements, and political parties to mobilize, but also economically for new forms of corporate and international governance.<sup>25</sup>

Much of the current literature focuses solely on the notion of terrorists exploiting geographical areas for their training and future operations. The Central Intelligence Agency, State Department, and White House make reference to terrorist safe havens as a geographic location or region, usually situated along a border.<sup>26</sup>

The predominant geographic sanctuaries are understood as desert, jungle, or mountainous regions, as seen in deserts of northern Mali, the dense jungle in the tri-border region in South America, and the rugged mountains of the Afghanistan and Pakistan border. As previously mentioned by the QDRP, these “ungoverned” and “under governed” areas are the necessary spaces in which terrorist leadership are able to operate and train foot soldiers.

However, the physical geography of a safe haven is only one piece of the puzzle. Understanding the terrain and physical infrastructure of a terrorist safe haven supports crafting tactical strategies aimed at controlling these spaces, but misses, perhaps, the most critical variable, the human terrain of safe havens. The previously mentioned definition of “safe havens” is insufficient in that it fails to address demographics and what people bring to the creation and perpetuation of safe havens. For example, a particular group people in Africa can be separated and distinguished down to the sub-tribe level. The same could be said of different racial ethnicities centered around highly urbanized areas as well, such as gangs, neighborhoods, or religious areas. The dynamics that are built within these cultural communities create an atmosphere that is extremely difficult to infiltrate and influence if one is an “outsider.” Though the geographical terrain is easily travelled upon, the socio-ethnic differences occurring in these environments create a natural demographic boundary. These formed boundaries now allow for terrorist

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>26</sup> White House, *National Security Strategy*, 21; *Denying Safe Havens: Homeland Security’s Efforts to Counter Threats from Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia: Hearing Before the Subcommittee on Oversight, Investigations, and Management of the Committee on Homeland Security, United States House of Representatives*. 112th Cong. 1 (June 3, 2011).

organizations freedom of movement within their communal spheres of influence to include recruitment, training, planning, funding, and organization.

This study analyzes examples of geographic and demographic safe havens where both territory and populace amalgamate. The majority of research, literature, and policy regarding safe havens predominately focus on geographic areas that are ungoverned and provide terrorist groups freedom of action within that territory. Often, safe havens are viewed as a product of weak states or failed states where terrorist groups can operate in a geographic area free from interference because the government is too ineffective to control that space. However, terrorist groups have developed safe havens within states that have robust governance and security forces, like the United Kingdom, through demographic safe havens. In *Londonistan*, Phillips argues, “Under the noses of successive British governments, Britain’s capital had turned into “Londonistan”—a mocking play on the names of such state sponsors of terrorism as Afghanistan—and become the major European center for the promotion, recruitment and financing of Islamic terror and extremism.”<sup>27</sup> Islamic terror groups have been able to cultivate their ideology by importing dozens of extremists from around the world and then targeting local British Muslims with their virulent message. British born terrorists not only orchestrated the July 7, 2005 train bombings in London, but also have been instrumental in Al Qaeda attacks spanning the globe.<sup>28</sup> Phillips contends:

The striking feature of all of them [the terrorists] was the freedom with which they were able to use London as base camp for their terror activities, providing money, means of communication and bogus travel and identification documents to trainees who had graduated from the terrorist training camps. And all this without any attempt by the British authorities to stop them.<sup>29</sup>

Phillips goes on to assert that London has become the European epicenter of violent Islamic extremism and a portion of British Muslims view certain neighborhoods

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<sup>27</sup> Melanie Phillips, *Londonistan* (New York: Encounter Books, 2007), x–xi.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 7.

in London to be “Muslim areas” where non-Muslims were not welcome.<sup>30</sup> The demographic safe haven that Al Qaeda and other extremist groups have created in London and still enjoy today serves as a stark example of terrorist safe havens developing in modern and fully governed states.

Demography is a critical variable as terrorist networks seek to establish safe haven within an area where they can blend in, become part of society, and exploit the human terrain for both tactical and strategic advantages, as evident in London. The safe haven does not necessarily have to be a barren expanse of terrain or a cave high in the mountains. The development of a terrorist safe haven in northern Mali is another recent example illustrating the importance of demographics. Juan Castillo’s recent analysis of the conflict in Mali asserts that demographics were the lynchpin of success for both the terrorist groups and Malian security forces. According to Castillo, “As the conflict raged on it was clear that Mali had transformed itself into a dynamic area of operations in which a variety of violent non-state actors not only interacted with each other, but also were forced to navigate through a complex human geography.”<sup>31</sup> Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb exploited the longstanding grievances of the indigenous Tuaregs, which influenced the development of local jihadist groups like the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MOJWA) and Ansar Dine.<sup>32</sup> All three terrorist groups were able to carve out a space within which they could operate, free from government attacks.

Understanding the human terrain of safe havens is imperative to crafting strategy aimed at fighting this critical asset of terrorist groups. Castillo illustrates the point by referencing Mao Tse Tung who equated the civilian population to “water” and the insurgent the “fish” that needs the correct conditions to survive.<sup>33</sup> Castillo credits a melting pot of ethnicities, clans, and tribes for the limited success of the Malian security forces to counter the threat and growth of the safe haven. These groups “developed their

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 197.

<sup>31</sup> Juan Camillo Castillo, “The 2012–2013 Mali Conflict: Considerations on the Human Battlespace and Strategic Outcomes,” *Small Wars Journal* 9, no. 8 (2013), 1.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 2.

own cultural practices, sustenance methodologies and other collective behaviours based on their environment and overall group structures and interests.”<sup>34</sup> The Malian security forces were unable to navigate through the complexity of the human terrain in Mali, which favored terrorist networks and provided them safe haven.

Strategists typically identify key physical terrain that will provide a decisive advantage in the conduct of military operations. However, demographics of the safe haven present an even more daunting challenge, where the human terrain is often a complex social structure that terrorist attempt to exploit. Bard E. O’Neill is one of the few authors who addresses both the “physical environment” and the “human environment” in *Insurgency and Terrorism*.<sup>35</sup> O’Neill argues that evaluating the environment should be the first criterion for understanding an insurgency.<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, O’Neill asserts that, beyond just demographics, the impacts of social structure to include race, ethnicity, religion and caste systems are criteria that must be distinguished.<sup>37</sup> O’Neill argues that geography and physical infrastructure can illuminate the potential forms of violence that insurgents may use, but demography and social groups highlight the underlying causes of the insurgency.<sup>38</sup>

Strategists must understand the non-physical space within a safe haven if they are going to have success in countering the threat. Tribal, ethnic, and religious affiliations are critical factors in selecting and developing a safe haven for terrorist groups who desperately need popular support within the safe haven to be successful. O’Neill cites these social divisions as being particularly important because rival groups compete for recruits, and existing grievances between different groups can have an impact on the insurgency.<sup>39</sup> Secondly, the internal structure of authority is paramount because segmented societies have different hierarchical authorities that hold significant power

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>35</sup> Bard E. O’Neill, *Insurgency & Terrorism: Inside Modern Revolutionary Warfare* (Washington: Brassey’s, 1990), 53.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 59.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 67.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 60.

over their segment of the population.<sup>40</sup> For example a Sunni jihadist group allied with Al Qaeda would have a difficult time cementing a sanctuary within an area that the local population is predominately Shia or even within a Sunni community that is not Arab, similar to the autonomous Kurdish region of Northern Iraq. Therefore, terror groups seeking safe haven must consider tribal and sub-tribal societal structure when seeking out safe havens. The population must be sympathetic, coerced, or co-opted in order to develop a safe haven.

We will argue that the human domain of a safe haven is just as critical to the counter-insurgent as it is to the insurgent if either is to achieve victory. Some terror groups will instill fear to achieve a foothold within the indigenous community, but the most successful groups attempt to develop popular support from the population, which if properly secured can present the counterinsurgent with an almost insurmountable task. Demography presents an obstacle to developing intelligence for the counterinsurgent and, without quality intelligence, a strategy has limited prospects for long-term success.

## **B. STRATEGIES FOR COUNTERING SAFE HAVENS**

Currently, much of the written literature surrounding the strategy of attacking enemy safe havens is either too vague, or places the majority of the emphasis on the geographical nature of the identified area. Though many documents highlight the importance of denying terrorist safe havens and the relative security they provide, the strategy is either too broad or too ambiguous to be effective or realistic.

The failure to synergize strategy to policy is supported by testimony from Jacquelyn L. Williams-Bridgers, contained in a Government Accountability Office's (GAO) report that examines the basic inefficiency of strategies to counter safe havens.<sup>41</sup> The report indicates a breakdown on the communication among government agencies to

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 61.

<sup>41</sup> *Combating Terrorism, U.S. Government Strategies and Efforts to Deny Terrorists Safe Haven: Testimony before the Subcommittee on Oversight, Investigations and Management, Committee on Homeland Security, House of Representatives*. 112th Cong. 2 (2011) (statement of Jacquelyn L. Williams-Bridgers).

accurately report on the strategic initiative found in the National Security Strategy. Williams-Bridgers goes on to specifically testify that:

[t]he U.S. government has not fully addressed reporting requirements to identify U.S. efforts to deny safe haven to terrorists. Congress required the President to submit reports outlining U.S. government efforts to deny or disrupt terrorist safe havens in two laws—the IRTPA and the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year (FY) 2010.<sup>42</sup>

The issue, according to the GAO, is not necessarily the collection of data to adequately categorize these areas. The Department of State produces a document that identifies about a dozen key terrorist safe havens each year, the annual *Country Report on Terrorism*.<sup>43</sup> The apparent problem highlighted in Williams-Bridgers testimony is the failure to effectively “address the full scope of U.S. activities or assess overall effectiveness”<sup>44</sup> of the United States’ strategy to deny or disrupt these sanctuaries. This is a gap that that this thesis aims to help fill.

This study provides four distinct strategies that can be used against terrorist safe havens.

## **1. Decapitation/Leadership Targeting**

A decapitation strategy focuses on targeting terrorist leadership. Lethal targeting of operational leaders and support leaders can have devastating effects on centralized organizations. Safe havens afford terrorist organizations the freedom to recruit, train, and operate in relative security. However, safe havens also present a vulnerability for terrorist groups. Safe havens draw in clusters of leaders to manage recruitment, training and operations.

In order to best disrupt or deny the terrorist activities that are operating within these sanctuaries, one employable strategy would be to directly target the leadership. The general concept behind this strategy would be twofold: to disrupt the organization from the top down and deter subordinate leadership from wanting to assume the vacant role

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>43</sup> DOS, *Country Reports on Terrorism 2012*, 180–185.

<sup>44</sup> *Combating Terrorism*, 9.

because of the fear of similar removal. The intent of this approach would be to cause confusion and precipitate the inability within this terrorist group to adequately organize because of the vacuum created by the targeted removal of leadership.

This strategy, however, has come under much criticism in recent years. The removal of Usama Bin Laden and other high profile terrorist leadership have continued to bring this strategy into the forefront of public opinion through the debate found on most mass media outlets. Disagreements on the use of leadership targeting stem from the proper application of international laws and regulations, political disagreements, and even moral arguments over this strategy, as evidenced with the use of drone strikes.

Furthermore, decapitation strategies have come under attack regarding their overall effectiveness in destroying terrorist organizations and reducing acts of terrorism. For example, in her article, *When Heads Roll: Assessing the Effectiveness of Leadership Decapitation*, Jenna Jordan works to “determine whether decapitation is an effective counterterrorism strategy that results in organizational collapse.”<sup>45</sup> As Jordan points out, “[t]he belief that decapitation is effective is based upon the notion that leadership is essential to the functioning of an organization.”<sup>46</sup> There appears to be a common understanding that the success, failure, or efficiency of an organization is often seen in the assessment and insight of the leadership. Jordan argues that leadership targeting as a strategy is effective, but is dependent on an organization’s type of basic demographic composition. The results of the proposed “decapitation” strategy will lend themselves only to specific, rare, isolated cases of success. Jordan’s collection of data leads to her to identify key variables that are highly influential when determining if or when this is an effective strategy. Jordan writes:

[a] group’s age, size, and type are all important predictors of when decapitation is likely to be effective. The data indicate that as an organization becomes larger and older, decapitation is less likely to result

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<sup>45</sup> Jenna Jordan, “When Heads Roll: Assessing the Effectiveness of Leadership Decapitation,” *Security Studies* 18, no. 4 (2009), 720.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 723.



in organizational collapse. Furthermore, religious groups are highly resistant to attacks on their leadership, while ideological organizations are much easier to destabilize through decapitation.<sup>47</sup>

Jordan makes a strong case for the specific conditions under which decapitation strategies work and even goes as far to state that “going after the leaders of older, larger, and religious groups is not only ineffective, it is counterproductive.”<sup>48</sup>

Though some might argue that leadership targeting is highly ineffective, or that it should be used only in rare situations, others indicate that this strategy is a much more effective means to deny and disrupt safe haven activities. Patrick B. Johnston, for example, disagrees that decapitation strategies are largely ineffective, arguing:

[t]his consensus is premature. Researchers have conducted few systematic assessments of leadership decapitation’s effectiveness; evidence remains scant. But contrary to scholars’ claims that leadership decapitation never works, the evidence appears to be more mixed. In numerous cases, decapitation was vital in degrading and defeating militant groups. In Peru, for example, Shining Path leader Abimael Guzmán’s 1992 capture crippled the group’s bid for power.<sup>49</sup>

Johnston’s critique for those who argue that this is not a viable strategy mentions that “the research design and methodologies used in nearly all previous studies make it difficult to draw credible conclusions about the impact of leadership decapitation.”<sup>50</sup>

Instead, Johnston argues that the collected data

suggest that leadership decapitation (1) increases the chances of war termination; (2) increases the probability of government victory; (3) reduces the intensity of militant violence; and (4) reduces the frequency of insurgent attacks.<sup>51</sup>

Though there are opposing views regarding the effectiveness of leadership targeting, there is evidence to suggest that it has been used successfully in previous

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 722–723.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 723.

<sup>49</sup> Patrick B. Johnston, “Does Decapitation Work? Assessing the Effectiveness of Leadership Targeting in Counterinsurgency Campaigns,” *International Security* 36, no. 4 (Spring 2012), 48.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 50.

conflicts. This study will point out that leadership targeting is a viable strategy when a state is attempting to deny or disrupt an enemy safe haven. Specifically, it will investigate the inception, growth, and destruction of the Shining Path in Peru, an insurgency located in the western portion of South America. This case offers a useful analysis of the implications and successes in utilizing a decapitation strategy.

## **2. Containment**

This strategy aims to quarantine and then dismantle terrorist groups. Though often complex in execution, this idea of quarantining the problem can be broken down into two simple distinct categories; strategic and tactical.

The strategic form of containment aims to quarantine and isolate states through diplomatic activities (condemnation from the United Nations), sanctions (economic embargos), and some military actions (threat of force). Perhaps one of the greatest incidents of strategic containment occurred in the decades following World War II, in which the United States faced a new enemy—the Soviet Union and communism—and through the threat of nuclear war was forced to fight these threats in new ways. President Harry S Truman introduced America’s first strategy of containment in March 1947 in a speech that was later coined “The Truman Doctrine.”<sup>52</sup> President Truman pushed for support and aid to Turkey and Greece in an attempt to ultimately “contain” the threat posed by the spread of communism. Truman also bolstered war devastated Western Europe through the Marshall plan, which sought to jumpstart Europe’s industrial economy, thus returning prosperity to the region and creating a capitalist bulwark against the promises of communism.

That same year, George F. Kennan, the infamous “Mr. X,” published an anonymous letter in *Foreign Affairs* describing a strategy of containment for the Soviet Union. Regarding the political struggles between the Soviet Union and the Western Countries, Kennan writes,

[t]his would of itself warrant the United States entering with reasonable confidence upon a policy of firm containment, designed to confront the

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<sup>52</sup> Harry S Truman, “The Truman Doctrine,” speech, Washington, DC, March 12, 1947, 2.

Russians with unalterable counterforce at every point where they show signs of encroaching upon the interest of a peaceful and stable world.<sup>53</sup>

Kennan's strategy of containment was focused against the industrial and potential military might of the Soviet Union, not countering the ideology. Overall, strategies of containment throughout the Cold War aimed to engage and contain the Soviet Union (and later communism as a whole) through diplomatic pressure, economic sanctions, arms racing, proxy wars, and negotiations.

The United States continues to use strategic containment as a strategy for confronting adversaries. Though military force can, and should, always be an option, the strategic means of containment can take more indirect forms. These methods can easily be identified through the United States application against unfriendly adversaries in the forms of sanctions, trade embargoes, and increased military and economic aid to allies.

Tactical containment is dependent on certain geographic conditions. A useful analogy of tactical containment is a dam at the end of a river or a barrier to prevent an oil spill from leaking further into the ocean; the goal is to stop the movement of a contagion through the creation of physical barriers such as walls, barricades, checkpoints, and other obstacles that prevent the free flow of objects, including people.

There are multiple examples of tactical containment throughout history. This thesis will investigate the French counterinsurgency in Algeria during the mid-1950's to early 1960s. Algeria's capital, the port city of Algiers, became the epicenter of the struggle for independence. The conflict in Algiers began with petty crime and minor disturbances between the French colonists and Algerians. Clashes between police forces and local nationals escalated until French paratroopers were deployed to manage the threat. The French strategy of containment was to literally wall off the Casbah neighborhood in Algiers—the urban safe haven of the insurgents—and to destroy the organization from within the walled compound. This case study will be examined in Chapter IV.

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<sup>53</sup> X, "The Sources of Soviet Conduct," *Foreign Affairs* 25, no. 4 (July 1947), vii.

### 3. Co-opting Surrogate Security Forces

Incentivizing key stakeholders while also threatening those who are not supportive of the policy objective is a strategy that the United States has employed in the past. This strategy has been employed at the micro-level to secure population centers and at the state level to maintain peace. Specifically, this strategy has been used in societies that have a robust tribal dynamic and weak central governance. A recent example is U.S. forces financing, training, and supplying the Sons of Iraq in Al-Anbar province, Iraq, where Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) had solidified a safe haven following the U.S. invasion in 2003. At the root of the strategy is securing the support of the population; without popular support neither the terrorist nor the counter-terrorist can be successful. The strategy seeks to create an inhospitable place for terrorists where the local population and indigenous security forces directly and indirectly counter terrorist groups, not the occupying forces. The importance of co-opting locals in tribal societies is critical because the tribal authority in these societies carries more influence with the population than the central government or occupying forces.

Austin Long addresses the strategy of co-opting locals and argues that “Tribal-State Security Relations” can essentially produce three types of relationships that evolve from co-opting tribes for security; a fourth that emerges is a variant that illustrates the U.S. strategy in Anbar province.<sup>54</sup> In his article, *The Anbar Awakening*, Long goes into detail regarding these relationships by stating them in relative priority, primarily that,

[t]he first is most likely in relatively stronger states and occurs when one group seeks to dominate the state’s security apparatus by commingling[sic] tribal networks with the formal state structure. This “state tribalism” is common in states that have not fully institutionalized [sic] the mechanism for providing internal security.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Austin Long, “The Anbar Awakening,” *Survival* 50, no. 2 (2008), 70, doi: 10.1080/00396330802034283.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.

Long asserts that state tribalism is common in the Middle East and parts of Africa.<sup>56</sup> The author continues his analysis of the types of relationship that can be commonly found by arguing:

[t]he second pattern is common in weaker states and involves quasi-autonomous militias based on tribe (or more broadly on ethnicity). These militias are effectively “deputized”[sic] to provide internal security in certain regions in exchange for some form of payment from the central state. This pattern can be termed “auxiliary tribalism.”<sup>57</sup>

According to Long, Afghanistan during the 1980s and 1990s is the best example of this form of tribal security relations.<sup>58</sup> He quantifies this statement by adding that,

[t]he final pattern of relations is the cession of all but the most desultory control over a territory to a tribe. Only the weakest or poorest of states would normally accept this type of relationship. Tribal leaders become, in effect, palatine vassals of the central state, and are often as restive as their medieval counterparts. This pattern can be termed ‘baronial tribalism.’<sup>59</sup>

Baronial tribalism is prevalent in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of Pakistan and areas of Yemen.<sup>60</sup> Lastly, Long mentions that,

[a] final variation on these three patterns occurs when an external power becomes involved in the provision of internal security to a state. This presents the possibility of a three-way relationship among tribe, state and external power that can produce many complications.<sup>61</sup>

This hybrid variant was evident during U.S. efforts in South Vietnam co-opting the Montagnards and in Iraq where U.S. forces developed a carrots and sticks strategy with the Sunni tribes in Al Anbar Province.<sup>62</sup>

There are advantages and disadvantages to co-opting local power brokers to deny terrorists a safe haven, and the strategy must be carefully employed and constantly

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 71.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 71–72.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 72.

<sup>61</sup> Long, “The Anbar Awakening,” 72.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

nurtured to be successful. First, local leaders, whether they represent tribal authority or religious leadership, have an agenda, and their personal preferences may not align with the United States or the host nation government's goals. Therefore, the occupying force needs to understand the agenda of the local leaders and support that agenda in order to leverage their power. The human dynamic is the most critical variable in this strategy because shifting allegiances as well as rivalries with other power brokers in the area can result in arming and supporting the wrong group. Norman Cigar argues, "even if successful in terms of increasing security, fielding local forces may lay the groundwork for longer-term consequences with which a local government will have to deal eventually."<sup>63</sup> This may include fomenting separatist movements and insurgencies.

Empowering the tribal authorities in Iraq resulted in significant success at destroying AQI's safe haven, but this success also alienated the central government in Baghdad. Cigar asserts that, within circles of government in Baghdad, the "tribalism" the U.S. empowered prevented further modernization and governance that the Baghdad authorities were trying to achieve.<sup>64</sup> The overall policy objective in Iraq was to develop a robust and democratically elected government, but yet the U.S. was paying and empowering local fighters to enhance security, ultimately undermining the democratically elected government. This strategy may seem to be at odds with the stated overall objective in Iraq, but some argue it was a necessity for denying Al Qaeda's base of operations. Empowering local militias to deny terrorists a safe haven seems to be a viable solution tactically, but may have limiting factors strategically.

Co-opting local security forces must be carefully implemented and the selection criteria for the supported local authorities must be stringent and the leadership vetted. In order to determine who to support one must acquire a vast amount of intelligence regarding that individual or group that the strategy is aimed prior to moving forward with support. Simply paying and arming local militias may exacerbate the safe haven if the supported force is actually playing both sides of the conflict and simply acting as an

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<sup>63</sup> Norman L. Cigar, *Al-Qaida, the Tribes, and the Government: Lessons and Prospects for Iraq's Unstable Triangle* (Quantico, VA: Marine Corps University Press, 2011), 125.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 126.

opportunistic. Furthermore support must continue until the central government of that country can support the effort itself, or the strategy runs the risk of losing the fragile gains made. In Iraq, AQI is now combating the strategy with its own version of the “carrot-and-stick” method in Al Anbar province.<sup>65</sup> AQI operatives have developed their own local alliances with SOI members and threatened those that were not amenable to the agreement, resulting in some SOI leaders being sympathetic to AQI due to a lack of governmental support.<sup>66</sup> Following through with a plan for maintaining the tribal security forces or transitioning to government security is critical, and without it, terrorists will simply flow back into the area unmolested.

The implementation of the surrogate security forces strategy will be further analyzed in a case study of the SOI and their success combating Al Qaeda safe havens in western Iraq. The case of the SOI provides a valuable analysis for understanding the benefits as well as the dangers of co-opting locals to deny terrorist safe havens.

#### **4. Pseudo Operations**

Both geographic and demographic safe havens present challenges for forces targeting networks where intelligence is difficult to gather and the utility of striking a target may not be possible or even counter-productive to the overall effort. A strategy that has been employed effectively in Kenya, Northern Ireland, Malaya, and Rhodesia has been the use of “pseudo teams” to infiltrate terrorist safe havens and networks to garner actionable intelligence, conduct strikes, and sow distrust amongst terror groups. This strategy focuses on destroying a network from within and destroying the group’s operational capacity.

Pseudo operations, “indicates the use of organized teams which are disguised as guerrilla groups for the long- or short-term penetration of insurgent controlled areas.”<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Cigar, *Al-Qaida, the Tribes*, 109.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 111.

<sup>67</sup> Lawrence E. Cline, *Pseudo Operations and Counterinsurgency: Lessons from Other Countries* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2005), 1.

The tactic of disguising oneself as the enemy is as old as warfare, but effectively applying a pseudo strategy requires special skills, specially selected individuals, command and control, and patience.

According to James Spies, “Utilizing informants and sources in the conduct of counterinsurgency and counterterrorism has been limited to intelligence gathering alone without emphasis on large-scale infiltration of terrorist networks.”<sup>68</sup> Deep infiltration of terror networks and their safe havens cannot be achieved without the use of human intelligence (HUMINT); too often the United States has relied on technology to bridge the gap where HUMINT is lacking. Pseudo teams, comprised of “turned” insurgents who have been extensively vetted, provide a deep penetration strategy that is required to effectively target terrorist groups in safe havens.

Initial doctrinal use of pseudo teams was developed by General Sir Frank Kitson of the British Army while fighting the Mau Mau insurgency in Kenya, which spanned from 1952–1960.<sup>69</sup> Kitson arrived in Kenya in 1953 and found that the sweeps the British were conducting were not producing results.<sup>70</sup> Kitson devised a plan of “turning” captured Mau Mau insurgents and employing them against the insurgency by penetrating insurgent networks for intelligence gathering. Kitson’s pseudo groups devastated the Mau Mau and were far more effective than the aerial bombardment and massive conventional sweeps that preceded their employment.<sup>71</sup>

Kitson used his extensive experience with pseudo operations against the Mau Mau as a template for executing operations in Malaya, where the colonial government battled a communist insurgency from 1948–1960.<sup>72</sup> The communist guerrillas were

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<sup>68</sup> James Spies, *Pseudo Operations: The Answer to the Snowflake* (Joint Special Operations University [JSOU] Report 06-7) (Hurlburt Field, FL: JSOU, June 2006), 99.

<sup>69</sup> Wunyabari O. Maloba, *Mau Mau and Kenya: An Analysis of a Peasant Revolt* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1993), Introduction Section.

<sup>70</sup> John Arquilla, *Insurgents, Raiders, and Bandits: How Masters of Irregular Warfare Have Shaped Our World* (Lanham, MD: Ivan R. Dee, 2011), 218.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 219.

<sup>72</sup> Edgar O’Ballance, *Malaya: The Communist Insurgent War, 1948–60* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1966), 13.



“almost completely unable to cope with this new approach to fighting them.”<sup>73</sup> By 1960, Kitson and the British had quelled the guerrilla problem in Malaya and developed and proven a new doctrinal approach that would soon be mimicked in the 1965–1980 Rhodesian Bush War by a special operations unit known as the Selous Scouts.<sup>74</sup>

The Selous Scouts of Rhodesia were a Special Forces unit composed of white Rhodesian NCOs and officers who led teams of African pseudo operators who were “turned” insurgents fighting against guerrillas during the Rhodesian Bush War. The Selous Scouts would penetrate the guerrilla safe havens and garner actionable intelligence and relay the information to Rhodesian strike forces, typically composed of the Special Air Service (SAS) that had a quick reaction time and employed helicopter assaults to destroy guerrilla formations and camps. This concept provided anonymity to the pseudo operators and limited their chances of compromise to the guerrillas. The Selous Scouts used the doctrine that Kitson had proved in Kenya and Malaya but evolved the concept to include conducting lethal strikes, which changed the way pseudo operators had historically been employed.

The implementation of the pseudo operations strategy will be further analyzed in a case study of the Selous Scouts and their success combating two communist insurgencies during the Rhodesian Civil War. The case of the Selous Scouts provides a valuable analysis for understanding the conceptual framework and doctrine of pseudo operations.

## C. CONCLUSION

Realizing that the complexity of the problem that terrorist safe havens present, this study attempts to provide military strategists assistance in framing the problem set. The variables of geography and demography are distinct and each presents a set of challenges that the strategist must contend with in order to craft a realistic and feasible strategy. Despite being analytically distinct, each strategy that we propose in this study

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<sup>73</sup> Arquilla, *Insurgents, Raiders, and Bandits*, 221.

<sup>74</sup> Peter Baxter, *Selous Scouts: Rhodesian Counter-Insurgency Specialists* (Solihull, West Midlands, United Kingdom: Helion, 2011), 7.

may only be a partial solution for defeating territorial and demographic safe havens in practice. In other words, these strategies are not mutually exclusive and potentially a combination or sequencing of these strategies may be the solution to a particular safe haven. The following case studies will further elucidate these points.

The next four chapters will present case studies where each of the strategies to counter safe havens will be explored in greater detail. Chapter III will investigate leadership targeting against the Shining Path in Peru. It will look at the short term effects of the capture of Guzman, but also note the return of the Shining Path in recent years. Chapter IV will trace the French tactic of containment in Algiers in the 1950s and 1960s, noting the successes and limits of this approach. Chapter V will process trace a more recent case, the U.S. use of “carrots and sticks” to coopt the tribal leadership in Anbar Iraq, with the aim of fighting AQI. And Chapter VI will analyze the Rhodesian’s use of pseudo operations to fight insurgents in the 1970s.

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### **III. DECAPITATION: A LEADERLESS VICTORY**

#### **A. INTRODUCTION**

Immediately following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the United States' policy towards terrorism made a strategic shift from a law enforcement effort to viewing terrorism as an act of war. President George W. Bush declared a Global War on Terror (GWOT) and promised that attacks against the United States would not go unpunished, and terrorist groups would be pursued around the world. Over a decade has passed since the attacks on New York and Washington D.C.; the GWOT continues with targeted counter terrorism operations, two wars of occupation in Middle Eastern countries, and limited success with de-radicalization efforts.

One method to fight or deter this growing threat against the United States is the implementation of a decapitation strategy that focuses on targeting terrorist leadership, either through killing or capturing key individuals. The general concept behind this strategy would be twofold: to disrupt the organization from the top down and deter subordinate leadership from wanting to assume the vacant role because of the fear of similar removal. The intent of this approach would be to cause both confusion and the inability to adequately organize within a terrorist group because of the vacuum created by the targeted removal of leadership.

In addition to causing a leadership vacuum, effective targeting of terrorist leadership increases so called "terrorist fratricide"—terrorists killing suspected informants within their ranks. Terrorist fratricide is evident amongst terror groups that have had their leadership targeted from Al Qaeda to the Tamil Tigers.<sup>75</sup> Exploiting Terrorist Fratricide is an important potential force multiplier for U.S. efforts to defeat terror groups through leadership targeting. Furthermore, an effective leadership targeting methodology exploits seams in the group's network and provides immediate and measurable feedback in the numbers killed and captured.

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<sup>75</sup> Max Abrahms, "What Terrorists Really Want, Terrorist Motives and Counterterrorism Strategy," *International Security* 32, no. 4 (Spring 2008), 90–92.

Decapitation strategies, however, have come under criticism in recent years. Disagreements on the use of leadership targeting stem from the debates over international laws and the legality of targeting individuals in foreign countries, as well as from political disagreements, questions concerning the overall effectiveness of the strategy, and even arguments on leadership targeting's morality, as evidenced by the use of drone strikes on suspected terrorists.

Geographic and demographic safe havens play a potentially important role in leadership targeting. Safe havens afford terrorist organizations the freedom to recruit, train, and operate in relative security. However, safe havens may also present a vulnerability for terrorist groups as they draw in leaders to manage recruitment, training, and operations.

The strategy of leadership targeting in demographic and geographic safe havens will be examined in this chapter through operations used by the Peruvian government to target and disable leadership in the Shining Path during an approximate 10 year period from 1982–1992. This study will first look at the background conditions that caused this insurgency to flourish. The study will then examine the importance of structure and the influence that a charismatic leader has on an organization's direction and ideology. Finally, the inspection of such critical elements will provide an analysis of how the Peruvian government's use of leadership targeting impacted the country's insurgency. The closer examination of this case will demonstrate the positive gains, risks, and negative affects incurred when implementing a decapitation strategy in a geographic and demographic safe haven.

## **B. THE SHINING PATH: PERU'S INSURGENCY**

Although elements of the organization can be traced back to the mid 1960's, a Maoist insurgency known as the Shining Path, or in Spanish Sendero Luminoso, sprang up from the poor, uneducated, indigenous peasants who lived in the ungoverned mountains of Peru in the early 1980s. Although its rank and file was composed of peasants, the Shining Path was led by an academic scholar named Abimael Guzman Reynoso. Guzman, a Communist Party member, was able to mobilize students and

teachers at the small university where he taught, as well as a guerrilla force of peasants living in poverty and neglected by the Peruvian government.

Sendero Luminoso took root in the department of Ayacucho, Peru; a river valley area that has a dispersed population and steep, rugged terrain.<sup>76</sup> In *The Shining Path*, Billie Jean Isbell describes why this was a critical place to begin the insurgency,

Sendero chose Chuschi for its initial military operations precisely because of this absence of haciendas, which allowed SL [Sendero Luminoso] to experiment with peasant communities that had strong communal structures, autonomy over their resources, and whose experiences with capitalistic market penetrations were minimal. By initiating their revolution in what they believed to be a region that had escaped many of the semifeudal relationships of the hacienda system, Sendero perhaps hoped to avoid the mistakes made by the guerrillas inspired by the Cuban revolution who failed to gain support of hacienda peons for their short-lived insurgency in 1965.<sup>77</sup>

The peasantry, in other words, provided an ungoverned area that was ripe for influence and recruitment.

The ability for Sendero Luminoso to identify an area that allowed it to begin a base of operations was critical to the initial growth of the movement. Like any organization seeking to take a foothold, Sendero Luminoso found shortcomings in Peru's governmental structure and then worked to exploit existing gaps. Due to terrain, and possibly a degraded sense of sympathy for the indigenous population, the government kept the rural hinterlands at a distance and free of government intervention. These pockets of indigenous people outside the major urban city centers, like Lima, were easy converts to the Shining Path, which capitalized on the government's regional absence and influence. The division formed amongst the Peruvian population set the conditions for Guzman's ideology to flourish. Ton de Wit and Vera Gianotten note that for a poor, impoverished demographic like that of Ayacucho, a "deficient infrastructure, permanent shortage of drinking water, limited production of energy, and inadequate means of

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<sup>76</sup> Gordon H. McCormick, *The Shining Path and the Future of Peru* (R-3781-DOS/OSD) (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1990), 3.

<sup>77</sup> Billie Jean Isbell, "Shining Path and Peasant Responses in Rural Ayacucho," in *The Shining Path of Peru*, ed. David Scott Palmer (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), 60.

communication perpetuate indefinitely the already limited possibilities.”<sup>78</sup> Simon Strong, in, *Shining Path: A Case Study in Ideological Terrorism*, further describes the demographic safe haven where the Shining Path took root,

Three quarters of the Ayacucho department’s inhabitants scraped a living by subsistence farming.... State justice lay mostly in the hands of those who could afford it. With the grinding poverty, the absence of schools and medical posts, the malnutrition and 45-year life expectancy, and its alienation from and contempt for central government, the region was fertile breeding ground for revolutionary Marxism.<sup>79</sup>

In order to capitalize on this separation between the people and the government, the Shining Path needed to demonstrate to the population that it could provide for them, particularly by offering services that the current government was not providing. In the case of Sendero Luminoso, they attempted to sever the relationship between Peru’s governmental leadership based in Lima and that of the local Ayacucho population through several means. First, they targeted the 1980 democratic elections.<sup>80</sup> This demonstration, recorded as the first violent act conducted by the insurgency, was an attempt to “undermine the transition to democracy and provoke a continuation of military rule.”<sup>81</sup> Insurgency expert Gordon McCormick points out that the main issue facing the Shining Path was the ability “to turn this potential base of support into a reliable source of recruits, intelligence, and material aid.”<sup>82</sup> Michael L. Smith echoes these observations by contending that “Sendero [needed] this power to turn peasant communities irrevocably against the state.”<sup>83</sup>

Second, the Shining Path created a demographic safe haven by providing an important form of security and justice to the peasantry. Isbell writes,

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<sup>78</sup> Vera Gianotten and Ton de Wit, “The Origins and Logic of Shining Path Two Views,” in *The Shining Path of Peru*, ed. David Scott Palmer (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1992), 51.

<sup>79</sup> Simon Strong, *Shining Path: A Case Study in Ideological Terrorism* (London: Research Institute for the Study of Conflict and Terrorism, April 1993), 3.

<sup>80</sup> McCormick, *The Shining Path*, 15.

<sup>81</sup> Strong, *Shining Path: A Case Study*, 4.

<sup>82</sup> McCormick, *The Shining Path*, 18.

<sup>83</sup> Michael L. Smith, “Taking the High Ground: Shining Path and the Andes,” in *The Shining Path of Peru*, ed. David Scott Palmer (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1992), 24.

[t]he most significant factor leading to initial peasant support was that, at the beginning of Shining Path's insurgency, peasants in Chuschi were in favor not only of the popular schools and the moralization campaigns, but also of Sendero's program of eradication of "public enemies."<sup>84</sup>

In other words, Peru's failure, or inability, to address the Shining Path's activities in the hinterlands led to increased popular support for the insurgency.

Third, the Shining Path created a system of justice aimed at winning the local population over. "Public enemies" who stood trial under the Shining Path's system could be anyone, including individuals from neighboring villages who violated the local code of conduct, boundary disputes, and even thievery.<sup>85</sup> Often times, the population would not only support, but participate in these "popular trials" conducted by the leaders of Sendero Luminoso, which created a "pseudo local justice" system.<sup>86</sup> The Shining Path was able to demonstrate "swift justice" for those who violated standing rules and regulations.

Fourth, the Shining Path countered an existing tradition of favoring the capital and neglecting the hinterlands, and highlighted Indians over Hispanics. Degregorio explains,

[t]he founders of Sendero [formed] part of a long tradition of provincial elites who rose up against a system that concentrates everything in the capital, and who embraced *indigenismo* (glorification of Indian customs and traditions) as a reaction against the *hispanismo* (glorification of Hispanic customs and traditions) of the Lima upper classes.<sup>87</sup>

This neglect from the wealthy upper classes played into the ideology of the Maoist based insurgency and gave added impetus to attacking the state; it also demonstrates, for purposes of this thesis, the challenges that this dynamic posed for the government to

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<sup>84</sup> Isbell, "Shining Path and Peasant Responses," 61.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 65.

<sup>86</sup> Lima, Peru, *Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación* (Commission of Truth and Reconciliation), 2003, 41.

<sup>87</sup> Carlos Iván Degregorio, "The Origins and Logic of Shining Path: Two Views," in *The Shining Path of Peru*, ed. David Scott Palmer (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), 38.



regain control and legitimacy of its population. Peru's demographics, therefore, set the stage for both the insurgency's action and the government's reaction.

### **C. GUZMAN'S CHARISMATIC LEADERSHIP**

The Shining Path found their leader in an intelligent individual by the name of Abimael Guzman. Also known as "Comrade Gonzala," Guzman was a philosophy professor at the National University of San Cristobal de Huamanga in Ayachucho.<sup>88</sup> The charisma of Guzman turned the disenfranchised peasantry into a breeding ground for recruitment. His network of followers was built upon a train-the-trainer type of model during the 20 years before Sendero's attack on Peru's reinstatement of national elections. His students were able, under the guise of education, to travel throughout the Regional villages and spread Guzman's communistic views among an uneducated and vulnerable indigenous population. McCormick adds to the importance that demographics played in the movement's success by stating that,

Guzman was able to borrow the concept of the peasant-based revolution and (his own interpretation of) the tenants of Chinese Marxism.... The synthesis of these concepts, suitably interpreted by Guzman himself, was to provide the ideological basis of the new socialist Peruvian state. The revolution that would bring this "new state of workers and peasants" into being would logically begin among Peru's traditional Indian populations, the direct descendants of the country's socialist tradition.<sup>89</sup>

Guzman's background in education helped him become a natural teacher and leader within the organization. His ability to instruct and communicate his beliefs to others led to growth and reproduction of ideology through his "students" then teaching others. Strong goes on to explain the benefit of Guzman's approach of reaching out to the peasant population through the idea of multiplication whereby "he [Guzman] created Shining Path's main instrument of political penetration. Once these students graduated and took up their posts as teachers, they became the initial backbone of the party structure."<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> McCormick, *The Shining Path*, 3.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 4–5.

<sup>90</sup> Strong, *Shining Path: A Case Study*, 3.

Guzman's ability to lead the now emerging Sendero Luminoso was not solely centered on his teaching ability. Guzman possessed a highly charismatic, almost savior-like, quality that gained him recruits. McCormick further captures Guzman's influential leadership in key characteristics,

[a]uthority and control within Sendero, in this respect, appear to hinge on some variant of what has been termed the "charismatic leader-follower relationship." Such a relationship is based on four properties: (1) the group leader, in this case Abimael Guzman, is believed to have superhuman qualities; (2) group followers unquestionably accept the leader's views, statements, and judgment; (3) they comply with his orders and directives without condition; and (4) they give the leader an unqualified devotion.<sup>91</sup>

In *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence*, Mark Juergensmeyer offers a useful framework for thinking about the conditions that led to Guzman's messianic status. Juergensmeyer coined the term "cosmic war," which is a battle in which basic identity, dignity, and way of life are threatened, and in which all are required to participate so that Good can prevail over Evil. Juergensmeyer refers to "such images as 'cosmic' because they are larger than life. They evoke great battles of the legendary past, and they relate to metaphysical conflicts between good and evil. Notions of cosmic war are intimately personal but can also be translated to the social plane."<sup>92</sup> Juergensmeyer further argues, "[o]ne of the reasons a state of war is preferable to peace is that it gives moral justification to acts of violence. Violence, in turn, offers the illusion of power."<sup>93</sup> Under these conditions, charismatic leadership can help mobilize and organize people through promises of salvific rewards.

Guzman's behavior and strategy conform to the logic of cosmic war. Degregori echoes this observation:

Sendero's epic then, is a cosmic one. Its leaders are intellectual warriors in the service of a most exact science that regulates the universe like a

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<sup>91</sup> McCormick, *The Shining Path*, 7.

<sup>92</sup> Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence*, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001), 146.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 154.

limitless cosmic ballet. They must put everything in order according to Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, overcoming or destroying whatever resists its ineluctable laws.<sup>94</sup>

This “cosmic” environment created by Guzman continued to garner support and followers for the cause. Strong’s study on Sendero Luminoso further adds that,

...contemporary songs and poems demonstrate how Shining Path has been absorbed into Indian legend. In these, the revolution is regarded as a *pachacuti*, a cosmic upheaval in which the world is reversed and a new age begins in which a social order is inverted. At times, Guzman has been identified with the Inkari, a mythical figure based on the decapitated Inca, Atahualpa.<sup>95</sup>

Juergensmeyer goes on to say that,

[t]he idea of warfare implies more than an attitude; ultimately it is a world view and an assertion of power. To live in a state of war is to live in a world in which individuals know who they are, why they have suffered, by whose hand they have been humiliated, and at what expense they have persevered. The concept of war provides cosmology, history, and eschatology and offers the reins of political control.<sup>96</sup>

As with any cult-like organization, the leadership plays an integral role and the Shining Path is no different. McCormick’s states,

[i]solated and aloof, Guzman is nevertheless said to have shaped Sendero in his own image, exercising a strong personal hold over the movement’s agenda, direction, and doctrinal orientation. Despite its national presence and size, now believed to be as large as 10,000 cadre, Sendero remains a highly individualized movement, established and based on the cult personality of Comrade Gonzalo.<sup>97</sup>

As evidenced with Guzman and the indigenous population of Peru, an individual’s charismatic influence over a people or group carries great weight. This persuasion over

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<sup>94</sup> Degregorio, “The Origins and Logic,” 38.

<sup>95</sup> Strong, *Shining Path: A Case Study*, 2.

<sup>96</sup> Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind*, 155.

<sup>97</sup> McCormick, *The Shining Path*, 3.

the local populace is even more pronounced when the identified people or group are looking for leadership—a void often created when the country’s government fails to identify and support the population.

#### **D. AFTER AYACUCHO**

The Shining Path did not stay within the confines of rural Ayacucho, nor did it maintain the ‘peaceful’ relations with the peasantry as previously envisioned. The government’s failure to react quickly following Sendero Luminoso’s attack against the voter registry offered the insurgency time and space. This political power void was filled by the leadership ranks of the Shining Path. Having been in and around the area for years, Guzman was now able to deploy his supporters into a more active role. Village elders and municipal leaders either quit or were forced to resign. Those who were removed by force were often made an example of by Sendero’s leadership.<sup>98</sup> Thus the Shining Path went after the population for their alleged support of the government and the government went after the population for their alleged support of Sendero Luminoso.

Much of the problem between Sendero Luminoso and the peasantry started when the local population began to realize that the insurgency’s ideology was not in line with the population. Though the Shining Path was able to capitalize on its message in the early stages and win a support base through social services and opportunities for higher education, Sendero’s ideology and the expectations of the population began to diverge as “peasants began to realize that they were not participants in the revolution.”<sup>99</sup> Rather, the village supporters took on a supporting role to the Shining Path. Much of the population was forced into supplying the revolution with food, water, and personnel. The result became the familiar mantra, “if you’re not for us, you’re against us.” The film, *State of Fear*, shows through interviews and eyewitness accounts how the insurgents moved from village to village taking what they wanted, including child soldiers. If the locals did not support them, they were, beaten, tortured, or publically executed.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Gianotten and de Wit, “The Origins and Logic,” 51.

<sup>99</sup> Isbell, “Shining Path and Peasant Responses, 72.

<sup>100</sup> *State of Fear: The Truth about Terrorism*, film, directed by Pamela Yates, 2005 (New York: Skylight Pictures, 2005).

Within the first few years of the 1980s, the guerrilla arm of the insurgency was conducting increased operations within the rural outposts. Guerrilla forces began conducting assassinations of local officials and civil police within Andahuaylas, a city located approximately 50km southeast of Ayacucho with roughly the same demographic makeup. Though the government police and “counter-insurgency” units were deployed to the area by 1982, they were not only incapable of denying guerrilla activity, but, rather, further harmed the population through brutal interrogation techniques in the hopes of rooting out suspected Sendero Luminoso supporters. The Shining Path moved into its urban strategy beginning in 1985 and took the fight to the city centers. Two tactics of this changing strategy were to weaken logistical lines by conducting attacks along the Central Highway, and to weaken the urban infrastructure through political assassinations and “armed strikes.”<sup>101</sup> Though not one act or tactic alone increased the threat of the growing insurgency, Smith writes that, “[w]ith carefully laid plans, centralized command, organization discipline, and meticulous care for detail, Guzman’s followers had strategic and tactical advantages over their political adversaries.”<sup>102</sup>

#### **E. THE GOVERNMENT’S COUNTER STRATEGY FROM THE TOP DOWN**

By the mid-1980s, Guzman had absolute control over the Shining Path and moved to expand the group’s operations from the rural mountainous region to the capital of Peru. Guzman’s autonomous leadership over the organization to direct operations proved to be a key vulnerability of the insurgency and eventually opened the door for the government to capitalize on it. Before this move, the government essentially ignored the problem until it came to the doorsteps of the capital. Once in the capital,

Shining Path recorded 5,350 “actions.” Of these, 1,100 acts of violence were recorded by the Ministry of the Interior....Court houses, state companies, local government buildings, political party offices, banks,

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<sup>101</sup> Michael L. Smith, “Shining Path’s Urban Strategy: Ate Vitarte,” in *The Shining Path of Peru*, ed. David Scott Palmer (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1992), 142.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

union headquarters, hotels, factories, shops, embassies and churches were fire-bombed....Newspaper offices were bombed and radio stations occupied.<sup>103</sup>

This tactical expansion was a strategic mistake for the Shining Path because it pressured the Peruvian military to focus on the movement now that it was attacking the capital and the wealthy elites who lived there. Furthermore, the attacks in the capital not only highlighted the insurgency, but provided the military and police with intelligence opportunities to target Shining Path leadership. Strong continues,

Amid a big increase in attacks in Lima, with the dynamiting and fire-bombing of police stations, department stores, petrol stations, embassies, restaurants, banks, hotels, offices and factories; and amid the killing in the capital of dozens of policemen and political leaders, a night curfew was declared in February 1986.<sup>104</sup>

The government of Peru continued to struggle with the growing insurgency through the 1980's. Then in November, 1991, a year after his first election to power, President Alberto Fujimori issued his first of several anti-terrorist decrees. His intent was to ultimately deploy the military and utilize them in their capacity to root out and destroy this threatening insurgency, which was threatening both the urban population centers as well as the country's economic prosperity. Additionally, the government realized that it was now in a different battle, one that was not only focused on violent activities, but also a propaganda battle for legitimacy. Some of the problems with these initial decrees were that they offered the military basically full access and power to combat the threat. Strong gives evidence to this,

[t]he armed forces were also allowed to occupy schools and universities. Further, they were given overall control of the prisons. These moves led to a stepping-up in the killing of students and the prison massacre in May 1992. Meanwhile, the effect of the censorship laws was, naturally, to muzzle the opposition, the media and reports of human rights abuses.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Strong, *Shining Path: A Case Study*, 8.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

The Peruvian Army's brutal tactics fed the growth of the insurgency with extensive human rights abuses. Realizing that these tactics were not only delegitimizing the government, but also fueling the mobilization of the Shining Path, the Peruvian Army developed a "hearts and minds" counter-insurgency campaign beginning in 1990.<sup>106</sup>

This new campaign centered on assisting the indigenous rural population while also developing and training peasant militias to counter the Shining Path.<sup>107</sup> The military was apprehensive at first, but soon demonstrated greater support for the new governmental initiative to arm and train these peasant militias known as "*rondas campesinas* locally, or Civil Defense Committees—CDCs by the army."<sup>108</sup> The government began this operation by giving weapons to the Ashanika people, in an attempt to help them both fight for themselves, and expand the reach of the government.<sup>109</sup> In turn, the hope was to deny the freedom of maneuver the Shining Path had gained through the rural areas and to delegitimize the organization.

The rural campaign was an essential component to the counterinsurgency strategy. Taking the fight to the enemy in their area of operations did two things. First, it demonstrated to the local populace that the government did, in fact, have an interest in their safety and security. This newly acquired support by the indigenous population drove the second factor. It not only began to generate actionable intelligence, but more importantly, it denied the insurgency their freedom of maneuver and began to disrupt their sanctuary.

This holistic counter-insurgency strategy was effective in turning the tide of the insurgency in Peru, but it also relied upon one critical tactic to destroy the Shining Path: leadership targeting. To do this, the Peruvian President needed to take full control of governmental agencies. In a public address in April, 1992, President Albert Fujimori

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<sup>106</sup> David Scott Palmer, "Countering Terrorism in Latin America: The Case of Shining Path in Peru," in *Countering Terrorism and Insurgency in the 21st Century, vol. 3: Lessons From the Fight Against Terrorism*, ed. James J. F. Forest (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2007), 298.

<sup>107</sup> McCormick, *The Shining Path*, 30.

<sup>108</sup> Palmer, "Countering Terrorism," 299.

<sup>109</sup> *State of Fear*.

“temporarily dissolved congress.”<sup>110</sup> The population, though skeptical, sympathized with the country’s leadership in order to give up their social rights in the hopes to protect their future and security. Not only were the people scared of the impending attacks of Sendero Luminoso, but saw President Fujimori as an outsider capable of bringing a new ideas and strategies to combat the terror.<sup>111</sup>

The Peruvian government developed an elite police intelligence unit solely to target Shining Path leadership called the Grupo Especial de Inteligencia (Special Intelligence Group, GEIN).<sup>112</sup> Led by Benedicto Jimenez, GEIN was essential to the counter-terror campaign of the Peruvian government. The small unit, formed originally in 1989, initially comprised only five personnel with substandard equipment.<sup>113</sup> The primary mission of GEIN was to track down and capture Sendero leadership.<sup>114</sup> After a change in political control, President Fujimori decided to extend greater authority to GEIN, which proved to be extremely fruitful by not only capturing dozens of Guzman’s senior level lieutenants in 1991, but by capturing Guzman himself in a Lima safe house in the fall of 1992.<sup>115</sup> The unit captured a home video of Guzman and multiple others of Shining Path’s leadership. From this video, GEIN was able to isolate Guzman to an upper floor of a dance studio located in Lima, Peru, where he was captured on September 12, 1992.<sup>116</sup>

Following the capture of Guzman, GEIN was able to kill or capture hundreds of militants and Shining Path leaders, which ultimately led to the group’s demise. David Scott Palmer highlights the success and impact of Guzman’s capture by stating that,

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<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Palmer, “Countering Terrorism,” 299.

<sup>113</sup> Gustavo Gorriti “El Día que cayó Sendero Luminoso,” *Selecciones del Readers Digest* (December 1996), 121, 123, 127.

<sup>114</sup> Palmer, “Countering Terrorism,” 299.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> *State of Fear*.



[b]y the end of 1994, Shining Path, while still a nuisance in some parts of the country, had ceased to pose a threat to the Peruvian state. Clearly, the new counterinsurgency strategy played a major role in such a dramatic turn of events.<sup>117</sup>

However, this approach to leadership targeting also came with some important limitations and drawbacks. As a form of dictatorship, President Fujimori was able to exercise singular power of the military and additionally formed agencies. This allowed the president the capability to employ and direct the GEIN where he saw fit in order to defeat the Shining Path. This singular ownership, however, greatly increased the likelihood of war crimes, atrocities against the public and government, as well as military corruption. Without the checks and balances, these crimes resulted in negative public opinion amongst the population and the removal of the Fujimori regime following a botched third election attempt in 2003.

## **F. CONCLUSION**

The importance of terrorist leadership is the critical variable that drives the networks, provides operational directives, determines mobilization and finances, provides religious legitimacy, and even affects morale. Sendero Luminoso, and the leadership of Guzman, coupled with the demographic and geographic safe haven provided by the Peruvian hinterland, presented an opportunity to dismantle the insurgent group by targeting its leaders. However, several key variables had to be in play for this strategy to work.

Ultimately, the actions of Sendero Luminoso itself led to the loss of their safe haven within the rural areas of Peru. The Shining Path's initial strategy of assimilating to the local populace and offering them great opportunities for advancement proved to be highly effective towards recruitment and support. However, when local villages did not fall in line with the emerging insurgency, Sendero Luminoso began recruiting in a more violent, forceful manner. Death threats and executions of the local population within rural areas began to separate the Shining Path from its support base. Guzman's heavy

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<sup>117</sup> Palmer, "Countering Terrorism," 300.

handed actions, coupled with the government's positive support to the people, resulted in loss of maneuverability by the Shining Path and drove them out of their sanctuary.

Once Sendero Luminoso lost its safe haven, the Peruvian government could take action aimed at destroying the movement through leadership targeting. First, the government's role in establishing a counter-insurgency strategy was foundational to the overall success of undermining Sendero Luminoso. Like Guzman, Fujimori was able to identify a strong concern of the population and capitalize on their needs. The threat facing the population centers at this point was so great that the people were more reluctant to give up their rights under congress for the hopes of a more secure future. The approach allowed Fujimori to maintain total control over operational activities combating the terrorist threat. The military and police became a "stove-piped" entity and all information was channeled through Fujimori. This control allowed Fujimori to institute operations without the time consuming consent of congress, which then allowed all successes of the operation to point to him. Operations then were able to be quick and decisive.

The negative impacts of this approach, however, resulted in the military and law enforcement's "blank check." This aggressive approach by the Peruvian leader required results, often times at the detriment of the population it was designed to protect. Additionally, governmental change in the exercise of power compromised the democratic make up of Peru and transformed it into one appearing to have more dictator-like qualities. After the removal of the Fujimori regime, the newly elected President Garcia instituted "the so-called *Libro Verde*, or Green Book. The plan envisioned stronger executive control, a comprehensive counterinsurgency strategy, and the implementation of free market principles to restore the economy."<sup>118</sup>

The second implementation of the effective strategy was the use of "rondas" or "CDCs." Though good in vision, the implementation of such tactics was slow. The majority of the military did not speak the rural, indigenous dialects.<sup>119</sup> This resulted in

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<sup>118</sup> Palmer, "Countering Terrorism," 305.

<sup>119</sup> *State of Fear*.

confusion, brutal tactics against the rural population, and a negative view of the government. However, over time, select individuals from the indigenous population were attached to military units. This was essential to the success of their operations because the locals “knew the community, spoke the local language or dialect, and often could help the military unit communicate with locals and gather better information on the Shining Path sympathizers and operations.”<sup>120</sup> The growing success of the military led to a more restrictive area for the insurgency to maneuver in, as well as to both the government and population assuming roles in stopping the negative effects of Sendero Luminoso.

Lastly, the widening net cast by the successes of the military and police allowed for greater information gathering. This gathered intelligence was applied in targeting Shining Path leadership and, ultimately, against Abimael Guzman Reynoso. Guzman’s initial promises for advancement were unmet, and his image, which was assumed by Sendero Luminoso, was now largely tarnished due to their horrific tactics against the people. This negative association provided the government the opportunity to pursue and target the insurgency’s leadership because of the lack of available sanctuary.

The implementation of a decapitation strategy by the Peruvian government has proven to be a successful one. Although there remain small pockets and an insignificant resurgence by the Shining Path within Peru, their ability for future sustainment does not currently pose an overwhelming threat to governmental organization and the Peruvian population any time soon.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Palmer, “Countering Terrorism,” 298.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 303.

#### **IV. CONTAINMENT IN ALGIERS: CONTROLLING THE OUTPUT**

Containment strategies aim to encircle adversaries with the aim of restricting their operations and plans. Though often complex in execution, the idea of containment can be broken down into two simple distinct categories; strategic; and tactical. The strategic form of containment aims to quarantine and isolate states through diplomatic activities (condemnation from the United Nations), sanctions (economic embargos), and some military actions (threat of force, sea blockades). Perhaps one of the greatest incidents of strategic containment occurred in the decades following World War II, in which the United States faced a new enemy—the Soviet Union and communism. The United States employed a variety of means aimed at preventing the spread of Soviet power and influence, including nuclear deterrence, the placement of conventional forces, economic sanctions, strategic communications, proxy forces, and development and aid to vulnerable states.

Tactical containment is largely dependent upon certain geographic conditions and is used to quarantine a specific enemy by physically preventing their movement into or out of an area. A useful analogy of tactical containment is a dam at the end of a river or a barrier to prevent an oil spill from leaking further into the ocean; the goal is to stop the movement of a contagion through the creation of physical barriers, such as walls, barricades, checkpoints, and other obstacles that prevent the free flow of objects, including people.

This chapter will investigate the French effort to tactically contain insurgents in Algeria during the mid-1950's to early 1960's, specifically in Algeria's capital, the port city of Algiers, which became the epicenter of the struggle for independence. The French strategy of containment was to literally wall off the Casbah neighborhood in Algiers—the urban safe haven of the insurgents—and to destroy the organization from within the walled compound.

Though the war for Algerian independence from France was long and protracted, this study will focus primarily on the urban conflict with the country's capital of Algiers

from mid-1956 to the fall of 1957. In the first section of this chapter, the study will provide the cultural and demographic background for the belligerents involved. Second, the study will systematically examine the tactical strategy of containment utilized by the French to combat the threat. Finally, the chapter will weigh the benefits, potential risks involved, and measure of effectiveness to a state that utilizes tactical containment to counter insurgent and terrorist safe havens.

#### **A. GEOGRAPHY AND FRENCH COLONIALIZATION**

Located on the northern coast of Africa, Algeria has direct access to the Mediterranean Sea and is approximately 80 miles off the southern coast of Spain. The coastline makes up around 16 percent of the entire modern day border. By land, Algeria is bordered by several nations that have made international headlines in recent years, including Libya to the East, and Mali on the southwestern border. Together with the Western Sahara, this region is historically known as the Maghrib.

Due to its complex geographic position, Algeria has long been subject to numerous transient people and trading routes. Many of the original settlers of today's Algeria were from the tribal people known as the Berbers. One historical narrative of the country mentions, "[t]he word Berber goes back to the Greeks, who called the people they found living in the Maghrib at the dawn of history barbarians, a terminology subsequently adopted in various forms by Romans, Arabs, Europeans, and others."<sup>122</sup> Due to its rich coastal area, the Phoenicians took up residence within the country, although it was later taken over by the Carthaginians during the eighth century.<sup>123</sup> After nearly six and a half centuries of control, the area was overthrown by the Roman Empire, but fell to the Vandals in 430 A.D.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> John Ruedy, *Modern Algeria: The Origins and Development of a Nation* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2005), 9.

<sup>123</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Nations*, "History—Algeria—Area, System, Power, Policy," n.d., accessed October 7, 2013, <http://www.nationsencyclopedia.com/Africa/Algeria-HISTORY.html>.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*

The region continued to change hands until the “Arab invasion of the seventh century brought about the Arabization of many cities and several coastal areas....”<sup>125</sup> In the 1700s, U.S. and European forces battled the persistent presence of Barbary pirates along Algeria’s coast until it was formally “proclaimed and integral part of France by the constitution,” in November, 1848.<sup>126</sup> The *Encyclopedia of the Nations* notes,

Al-Jazair, as it was called in Arabic, became, in French, Algérie, a name that France applied to the territory for the first time in 1839. In 1848, northern Algeria... was organized into three provinces. Following the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–71, large numbers of Alsatians and other French colonizers settled the most fertile confiscated lands, as did other Europeans at the invitation of France. Muslims had no political rights except for limited participation in local financial delegations.<sup>127</sup>

The French built upon the naturally segregated geographic, economic and demographic influences in the region. Within the capital, historian Ruedy highlights that, “[s]ociologically, the main divisions of the Algerian city were quarters, ethnic communities, and guilds.”<sup>128</sup> These demographic and geographic quarters in turn created natural boundaries between the Muslim locals and colonial French due to specific trades and businesses associated with the urban population. Many of the urban quarters appeared to be self-sufficient, which further segregated the groups and limited interaction.

Tensions between the local population and the French began to emerge during the two World Wars. Prior to these wars, the French Constitution, which was established in 1848, separated the Algerian colony’s citizenship from their Arab and Berber nationalism. According to Parolin, “Algerian natives were not full-fledged citizens and were governed by a special *Code de l’Indigénat* applied by administrative, not judicial, authorities.”<sup>129</sup> These tensions grew when, in World War I, France promised the

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<sup>125</sup> Ruedy, *Modern Algeria*, 10.

<sup>126</sup> Benjamin Stora, *Algeria 1830–200: A Short History* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), 244.

<sup>127</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Nations*, “History—Algeria.”

<sup>128</sup> Ruedy, *Modern Algeria*, 23.

<sup>129</sup> Gianluca P. Parolin, *Citizenship in the Arab World: Kin, Religion and Nation-State* (Netherlands: Amsterdam University Press, 2009), 94–95.

Algerian population that supported France in the war that they would receive increased freedoms in exchange for military service. Despite greater liberties not being granted during the interwar period, Algerians supported and fought on behalf of France during World War II as well.

To voice their opinion and desire for an autonomous nation, a Muslim leader by the name of Ferhat Abbas drew up a nine page “Manifesto” in 1943, which described Algerians’ desire for independence.<sup>130</sup> The Muslim community began a peaceful demonstration in the town of Sétif, calling for both independence and the release of the leader Messali Hadj.<sup>131</sup> The Muslim demonstration soon transpired into a violent confrontation with local police. The exchange between local police and the demonstrators enraged the local community, resulting in the gruesome murder of more than a hundred European settlers and the wounding of over a hundred more.<sup>132</sup>

In response, different groups of indigenous fighters, or *fellaghas*, emerged out of these struggles.<sup>133</sup> One such fellagha that came to light during this time was the National Liberation Front, or FLN. One source argues,

[t]he FLN emerged in 1954 from an impasse within traditional nationalist organizations led by Messali Hadj and Ferhat Abbas. It represented a new generation of activists who rejected compromise with the colonial authorities. For them, the armed struggle was the only way ahead.<sup>134</sup>

It was the FLN, or *Front de Libération Nationale*, which aimed to become the only leadership for Algerians. Many members of the FLN had grown up in a military environment; this relationship with the military had a great impact on the organizational structure, tactics, and strategy of the insurgency. The FLN became the political arm of

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<sup>130</sup> H. R. Kedward and Nancy Wood, *The Liberation of France: Image and Event* (Oxford: Berg, 1995), 261.

<sup>131</sup> Alistair Horne, *A Savage War of Peace: Algeria 1954–1962* (New York: New York Review Books, 2006), 25–26.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> Martin S. Alexander, Martin Evans, and J. F. V. Keiger, *The Algerian War and the French Army, 1954–62: Experiences, Images, Testimonies* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 18.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid., 19.

the insurgency, rallying the rebellion, and the Army of National Liberation, or ALN, was the interconnected militant arm that fought their colonial masters.<sup>135</sup>

## **B. INSURGENCY**

In November 1954, the FLN released its “Proclamation,” which highlighted, among other things, its organizational goal for “National Liberation through: 1) the restoration of the Algerian state, sovereign, democratic, and social, within the framework of the principles of Islam; 2) the preservation of all fundamental freedoms, without distinction of race or religion.”<sup>136</sup> Though there were multiple factions throughout Algeria during the years leading up to the formation of the FLN, by the time their “Proclamation” was produced, nearly all separate entities had assimilated and joined the FLN in one large Arab nationalist movement.

In order to manage the movement, a council of Arab elders was held in Switzerland during the summer of 1954 to establish control throughout Algeria.<sup>137</sup> At the conclusion of the meeting, a small contingent of the Arab leadership returned to Algeria where they conducted a “war council.”<sup>138</sup> It was here that the separated leadership decided to break up the country of Algeria into six zones, known as *wilayas*.<sup>139</sup> Each zone, or newly formed command, was then run by each of the five elders who were present during the “war council” meeting; the Sahara, however, was left vacant. These wilayas, along with the increasing French pressure throughout the region, not only further isolated the Muslim community from its French counterparts, but provided safe havens and sanctuaries for the militant leadership to recruit, train, and mobilize.

Algerian historian Clark argues that understanding that the small insurgency was facing a large, combat proven French military:

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<sup>135</sup> Michael K. Clark, *Algeria in Turmoil: A History of the Rebellion* (New York: Praeger, 1959), 111.

<sup>136</sup> Clark, *Algeria in Turmoil*, 112.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, 343.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*



[t]he objective of most FLN leaders was, therefore, to win a political victory. They sought to create a climate of insecurity that would bring Algeria to the attention of the world, and assert a moral claim for independence that would isolate France diplomatically.<sup>140</sup>

The intent for the FLN was to capitalize on native Algerians' perceived grievances and bring their cause to the forefront of the international community. The objective, therefore, was two-fold: to gain support of the local populace, and make up for their lack of operational capabilities through external support. In the case of the FLN, this support was sought specifically from the United Nations (UN).

In September, 1956, the FLN began bombing French cafes and local establishments, increasing terrorist activities, which further aggravated the relationships between the 'isolated' Muslim communities and French colonialists. The FLN strategy conforms to the logic outlined by Kydd and Walter, who argue that successful terrorist strategies have five principles: "attrition, intimidation, provocation, spoiling, and outbidding."<sup>141</sup> These principle strategies are vital to the success of the organization. However, they alone may not be sufficient. Kydd and Walter go on to state,

[t]o obtain their political goals, terrorists need to provide credible information to the audiences whose behavior they hope to influence. Terrorists play two key audiences: governments whose policies they wish to influence and individuals on the terrorists' own side whose support or obedience they seek to gain.<sup>142</sup>

This dynamic between the terrorists, their means of influence, and their hoped-for outcomes is visible in the film, *The Battle of Algiers*.<sup>143</sup> In the film, Ali la Pointe, a street thief who goes on to be one of the last FLN leaders standing, finds himself caught up in an angry mob of Arabs who are heading down to the French quarter to retaliate against French bombings of their homes. A boy who follows the group attempts to stop Ali,

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<sup>140</sup> Alexander, Evans, and Keiger, *The Algerian War*, 19.

<sup>141</sup> Andrew H. Kydd and Barbara F. Walter, "The Strategies of Terrorism," *International Security* 31, no. 1 (Summer 2006), 51.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid, 58.

<sup>143</sup> *The Battle of Algiers*, Film, Directed by Gillo Pontecorvo, 1966 (Italy: Rialto Pictures).

Boy: “Jaffar says you must stop. Listen to me Ali. Don’t go down there. The Army will slaughter us. Listen to me.”

Ali la Pointe: “Get out of here.... Halt!”

El-hadi Jaffar: “Stay calm! The FLN will avenge you! The FLN will avenge you!”<sup>144</sup>

The FLN and its leadership realized at the early stages of the conflict that in order to gain the support of the local populace and further the cause, they needed to become a legitimate organization in both the eyes of the people and the French government. They attempted to do this by protecting the people and standing up for their rights, and to be their voice. Conversely, for an organization to rise up in the face of the government, they need the backing of the population. As Galula writes,

[t]he importance of a cause, an absolute essential at the outset of an insurgency, decreases progressively as the insurgent acquires strength. The war itself becomes the principle issue, forcing the population to take sides, preferably the winning one.<sup>145</sup>

The FLN sought to take their grievance and advance it to the next level by mobilizing the population to push against the current regime. Kydd and Walter say that,

[p]rovocation helps shift citizen support away from the incumbent regime. In a provocation strategy, terrorists seek to goad the target government into a military response that harms civilians within the terrorist organization’s home territory. The aim is to convince them that the government is so evil that the radical goals of the terrorists are justified and support for their organization is warranted.<sup>146</sup>

This “goadings” of the French military by the FLN commenced on 20 August, 1955, a clash that came to be known as the Philippeville Massacre.<sup>147</sup> Members of the FLN brutally executed and dismembered 123 French colonialists and wounded numerous others. This FLN aggression solidified the French military’s intervention. Chalmers

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<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (New York: Praeger, 1964), 25.

<sup>146</sup> Kydd and Walter, “The Strategies of Terrorism,” 69–70.

<sup>147</sup> Chalmers Johnson, *Revolutionary Change* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1982), 158.

Johnson suggests that it was this violent act against the French population that instituted a similar method of brutality by the French military towards the Muslim community during the Battle of Algiers.<sup>148</sup>

Increasing pressure by the French military on the insurgents and the population resulted in a greater number of terrorist attacks. Alexander, Evans, and Keiger state that, “In response to this crisis, FLN leaders conferred in the Soumman Valley in August 1956 and decided to launch the Battle of Algiers.”<sup>149</sup> FLN leaders established six objectives in order to weaken the French response:

1. Total weakening of the French Army so as to deprive it of any possibility of a victory imposed by force of arms;
2. Large-scale deterioration of the colonialist economy by sabotage so as to make the normal administration of the country impossible;
3. Maximum disturbance of the economic and social situation in France so as to make the continuation of the war impossible;
4. Political isolation of France in Algeria and in the world;
5. Development of the insurrection in such a way as to make it conform to international law (personalization of the army, recognizable political power, respect for the rules of war, normal administration of the zones freed by the Army of National Liberation);
6. Constant action to bolster the people against the French attempts at extermination.<sup>150</sup>

Though the FLN had been active through the hinterlands of Algeria, the leadership decided it was time for a more pronounced attack. To do this, the FLN, as noted by Galula, “realized that they could achieve the greatest psychological effect on the French and on world opinion at the cheapest price by stepping up terrorism in the main cities, notably Algiers....”<sup>151</sup>

In late 1956, the FLN felt they were nearing a vote in the UN that would gain them their independence and so put pressure on Arab leaders within the international

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<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> Alexander, Evans, and Keiger. *The Algerian War*, 19.

<sup>150</sup> Clark, *Algeria in Turmoil*, 346.

<sup>151</sup> David Galula, *Pacification in Algiers: 1956–1958* (MG-478-1-ARPA/RC) (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2006), 62.

community to increase awareness of their struggle.<sup>152</sup> To demonstrate the resolve and unity of the Algerian community, a coordinated workers' strike began on 28 January 1957, and lasted eight days before laborers were forced back to work. "So well supported by Muslims was the strike that it all but shut down retail commerce and manufacturing across Algeria."<sup>153</sup> This strike, coupled with the urban terrorism against the French population and infrastructure, was intended to be the final 'surge' to achieve an Arab victory over their French colonial oppressors.

The FLN, now led by Saadi Yacef and Ali Ammar, alias Ali la Pointe, greatly increased terrorist operations in September 1956 by conducting "eighty-five separate attacks within the city limits of Algiers, killing twenty-four persons and wounding 116."<sup>154</sup> These types of operations "became a core FLN tactic," and included selectively placed bombs at least four separate times during the first six months of 1957.<sup>155</sup> This series of attacks set the stage for the French response, which became known as the Battle of Algiers.

### C. COUNTERINSURGENCY

Though France had declared a "state of emergency" in 1957, requiring the mass deployment of military forces to the region, French forces continued to struggle with the growing insurgency that was threatening its control of Algeria.<sup>156</sup> In order to provide relief and protection to its French population in Algeria, France developed a two-fold strategy: military intervention coupled with a hefty distribution of propaganda.

In 1956, prior to the declaration of a state of emergency, France developed and deployed the Fifth Bureau in support of operations in Algeria. Their mission was to support ground forces by developing a leaflet that would influence both French nationals

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<sup>152</sup> *The Battle of Algiers*.

<sup>153</sup> Martin S. Alexander and J. F. V. Kreiger, *France and the Algerian War, 1954–62: Strategy, Operations and Diplomacy* (Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 2002), 9.

<sup>154</sup> Clark, *Algeria in Turmoil*, 326.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, 30, 326.

<sup>156</sup> Stephen Morton, *States of Emergency: Colonialism, Literature and Law* (United Kingdom: Liverpool University Press, 2013), 149.

living in Algeria as well as Arab Algerians.<sup>157</sup> Their goal was to develop a propaganda system that “was based on a campaign of awareness and explanation whose central theme was one of reconciliation between France and Algeria.”<sup>158</sup> Additionally, the psychological campaign was wrapped up in the education of both the French and Muslim populations’ understanding of a positive future relationship as colonial country and to instill a sense of camaraderie and unity between France and Algeria.<sup>159</sup> Messaging changed over the years but never took the primary role in operations and was utilized instead as a force-multiplier, aimed to compliment military operations.

Algiers’ importance as the capital and a port city made it the center of gravity for the conflict between French military forces and guerrilla insurgents. The French surmised that the FLN was now operating within the urban city centers due to its increased attacks and intelligence gained from French controlled areas. The Casbah quarter, in particular, provided both a geographic and demographic safe haven for the insurgents. Prior to the onslaught of the Battle of Algiers in September, 1956, the Muslim community was already segregated from the French population in the Casbah, making it an ideal location for insurgents to hide out. Furthermore, the windy roads and tightly stacked buildings made movement slow for French forces. This congested urban environment allowed for any identified insurgent to fall away and blend back in to a geographic and demographic safe haven.

The French understood the importance of the Casbah as a safe haven for the FLN. As Galula notes, “[g]eographic factors are what they are and cannot be significantly changed or influenced except by displacing the population - an absurdity in peacetime— or by building artificial fences....”<sup>160</sup> Though there were already 400,000 French soldiers supporting the Algerian conflict by March 1956, the FLN still maintained the

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<sup>157</sup> Alexander, Evans, and Keiger, *The Algerian War*, 193.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid., 194.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

<sup>160</sup> Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 67.

ability to maneuver and raise support for their cause.<sup>161</sup> Realizing the Casbah provided a natural safe haven for the FLN to recruit, train, and educate their support base, the French sought to cut off this area from the rest of its surroundings.

In 1956, the French civil authorities named General Jacques Massu and his 10<sup>th</sup> Parachute Division to direct the battle within Algiers.<sup>162</sup> The urban terrain of the Casbah presented key choke points and natural boundaries that greatly restricted the freedom of movement traveling in and out of the sanctuary. General Massu sought to quarantine the problem by restricting the flow of personnel in and out of the Casbah and therefore controlling its violent outputs.

The film, *The Battle of Algiers*, depicts France's containment strategy and the control of the urban Casbah.<sup>163</sup> Pontecorvo, the film's director, depicts techniques used by French paratroopers to tighten the noose around the FLN. The quarantine was initially enforced by instituting a curfew and conducting military patrols. Military patrols were given strict orders by General Massu to engage and fire upon anything that moved. "They [the French military on patrol] left the dead [FLN] in the streets where they had been shot: there was no time to take care of the bodies and the population had to see them. To acquire credibility the paratroopers had to be even more extreme than the FLN."<sup>164</sup>

In support of these patrols, General Massu brought in elements of French Special Operations Forces, primarily the 11<sup>th</sup> Shock Battalion and the *Service de Documentation Extérieure et de Contre-Espionnage* (SDECE) in 1955.<sup>165</sup> The 11<sup>th</sup> Shock targeted the FLN with "booby-trapped" devices. The SDECE performed a similar role as the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) of the United States, and conducted espionage against the

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<sup>161</sup> Jo McCormack, *Collective Memory: France and the Algerian War (1954–1962)*, (United Kingdom: Lexington Books, 2007), xi.

<sup>162</sup> Paul Aussaresses, *The Battle of the Casbah: Terrorism and Counterterrorism in Algeria 1955–1957* (New York: Enigma Books, 2005), 80, 177.

<sup>163</sup> *The Battle of Algiers*.

<sup>164</sup> Aussaresses, *The Battle of the Casbah*, 87.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*, 79, 169, 171.

enemy.<sup>166</sup> A 1955 French Special Powers Act granted the military responsibility and legal authority for “public order, security of persons and property....”<sup>167</sup> These powers allowed General Massu and his troops to undertake the roles similar to a police force, but also allowed them to conduct military operations within the Casbah.

The military, now wearing multiple hats (military, police, public-works managers) aimed to collect actionable intelligence in order decrease the amount of violent FLN actions. To do this, the Special Powers Act gave the military the authority to arrest and detain any persons they felt were a threat. These arrests, coupled with the use of torture in some cases, produced significant intelligence, though the techniques utilized were later regarded as questionable and inhumane. General Aussaresses’ memoirs claim: “While torture was widely used in Algeria, it didn’t mean that it was an ordinary occurrence.”<sup>168</sup>

Pontecorvo, writer and director of the film, *The Battle of Algiers*, depicts the utilization of intelligence by General Massu and the French Paratroopers as having a “domino effect.” In other words, French security aimed to arrest the “low hanging fruit” as a means of gaining intelligence that would provide follow-on missions that would eventually allow them to continue to move up the terrorist tree towards the upper echelons of the FLN leadership and target the brains of the organization.<sup>169</sup>

Once the quarantine of the Casbah was put in place, the daytime movement of personnel was controlled through the use of military check points and film surveillance.<sup>170</sup> The French required proper documentation for all personnel entering or leaving the area. These strict measures led to the arrest of FLN leader Yacef in September of 1957.<sup>171</sup> The following month, “Ali la Point” was killed by paratroopers after failing to surrender when cornered in the Casbah.<sup>172</sup> General Massu’s physical

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<sup>166</sup> Ibid., 80, 171.

<sup>167</sup> Galula, *Pacification in Algeria*, 21.

<sup>168</sup> Aussaresses, *The Battle of the Casbah*, 128.

<sup>169</sup> *The Battle of Algiers*.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid.

<sup>171</sup> Clark, *Algeria in Turmoil*, 328.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid.

containment of the Casbah effectively allowed the French to control terrorist outputs and then surgically attack the organization that was isolated within the contained area.

The French use of containment on a tactical level was so successful, however, that following the Battle of Algiers, the French implemented a larger scale version of containment, taking it to a strategic level. Galula explains,

[i]n Algeria, the French naval blockade and the sealing of the borders prevented the flow of supplies to Algeria from Tunisia and Morocco, where large rebel stocks had been accumulated. No development was possible. The situation of the FLN forces after 1959 became so critical that most of their automatic weapons were buried for lack of ammunition.<sup>173</sup>

Though General Massu's paratroopers successfully controlled the FLN's terrorist operations from their Casbah safe haven through the use of containment, and France developed a wider containment strategy aimed at defeating the insurgents, Algerians ultimately won their independence in 1962 because of the loss of French popular support for the war.

#### **D. CONCLUSION AND ANALYSIS**

The two primary dynamics influencing the Battle of Algiers were the geographic terrain of the Casbah and the demographic makeup of the residing population. Prior to the 1957 battle, the FLN had already isolated itself from the French and the Arab communities had separated themselves from the rest of their colonial population in an attempt to demonstrate to the UN that they were, indeed, a free state, capable of maintaining their autonomy from the French. Additionally, the two opposing forces were not of the same culture, but separated by the heritages of French colonialists and Arab settlers. The segregation of groups provided a demographic safe haven within the Casbah from the French military and remaining colonial population, thus increasing the FLN's ability to more readily recruit, train, and develop legitimacy with their supporters than could the French. This isolation allowed for effective insurgent training and recruiting, but also made the movement vulnerable to attack. Furthermore, the urban infrastructure

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<sup>173</sup> Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 27.



provided boundaries, restricted movement, and created ideal choke points to control access. These two factors, geography and demography, greatly enhanced the French military's implementation of a tactical containment strategy.

Though the French did not deny the entire urban safe haven to the FLN, containing the Casbah effectively disrupted insurgent operations and slowed the movement's spread to other areas. Additionally, this containment allowed for a more concentrated use of force within a confined area, rather than chasing the enemy throughout the Algerian Sahara or neighboring countries. Furthermore, France's containment strategy put the French on the offensive and allowed their forces to determine the time and place of engagement. Tactical containment permitted the paratroopers to mitigate the risk to their troops based on collected intelligence, as well as minimize civilian casualties through a more targeted approach against FLN leadership, rather than through chance contact. With regard to the 'tactical factors' of containment, Galula supports General Massu's initiative by stating that,

the counterinsurgent must pay particular attention to whether the area can be easily isolated and compartmented by taking advantage of natural obstacles, sea, rivers, plains.... If natural boundaries are lacking, consideration must be given to building artificial ones.<sup>174</sup>

Though not specifically cited here by Galula, one can make the inference that the urban terrain can pose many advantages as well as disadvantages to the counterinsurgent. A confined environment allows for a more focused area to target for intelligence, as well as preventing both sides from rapid, open movement. The high concentration of a population also restricts the counterinsurgent from openly engaging the insurgent due to the risk of collateral damage, which would most likely become propaganda for insurgents to gain popular support.

Along with the challenges posed by geographic restrictions, demographics also play a critical role in insurgent and counterinsurgent operations. In many cases, there is a natural separation between the local population and counterinsurgent forces. This segregation from the counterinsurgent provides a natural level of security for the

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<sup>174</sup> Ibid., 99–100.

insurgent who is able to fall away and blend back in to his surroundings. Furthermore, this separation often prevents the counterinsurgent from freely moving throughout the area and going unnoticed. The level of support to the insurgents may not be strong; in some cases it may be derived from coercion. It is, therefore, vitally important for the counterinsurgent force to destroy the root of the problem and demonstrate to the local population that it is able to support and defend them.

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## V. PSEUDO OPERATIONS IN RHODESIA

A pseudo operations, “indicates the use of organized teams which are disguised as guerrilla groups for the long- or short-term penetration of insurgent controlled areas.”<sup>175</sup> The tactic of masking oneself as the enemy is as old as warfare, but effectively applying a pseudo strategy requires special skills, carefully selected individuals, command and control, and patience. As described in Chapter II, pseudo operators have been used to infiltrate terrorist safe havens and networks to garner actionable intelligence, conduct strikes, and sow distrust amongst terror groups. This strategy focuses on destroying a network from within and destroying the group’s operational capacity. Pseudo teams, comprised of “turned” insurgents who have been extensively vetted, provide a deep penetration strategy that is extremely useful for effectively targeting terrorist groups in safe havens.

This chapter analyzes the implementation of the pseudo operations strategy through the lens of the Selous Scouts in Rhodesia. The Selous’ tactical success combating two communist insurgencies during the Rhodesian Civil War is unparalleled by any other special operations unit and provides a valuable analysis for understanding the conceptual framework and doctrine of pseudo operations. This chapter will also illuminate the advantages and disadvantages of conducting pseudo operations while illustrating the viability of the strategy to disrupt or defeat terrorist safe havens.

The chapter proceeds as follows. The first section offers a history of pseudo ops, including their use in the Mau Mau rebellion, in the Malay Revolt, and in the Rhodesian Bush War. The second section offers a history of the Rhodesian Civil War pitting the white Rhodesian government against communist backed African insurgencies seeking majority rule. The insurgents sought control of the country after the Rhodesian government issued a Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) on November 11, 1965, formally severing colonial ties with the British. The third and fourth sections analyze the development of the Selous Scouts of Rhodesia and their operations

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<sup>175</sup> Cline, *Pseudo Operations and Counterinsurgency*, 1.

combating two insurgencies gripping the country. The final section analyzes the strengths and weaknesses of a pseudo operations strategy in combating terrorist safe havens and highlights the strategic utility of pseudo operators.

## **A. THE HISTORY OF PSEUDO TEAMS**

Initial doctrinal use of pseudo teams was developed by General Sir Frank Kitson of the British Army while fighting the Mau Mau insurgency in Kenya, which spanned from 1952–1960.<sup>176</sup> Kitson arrived in Kenya in 1953 and found that the sweeps the British were conducting were not producing results.<sup>177</sup> Kitson devised a plan of “turning” captured Mau Mau insurgents and employing them against the insurgency by penetrating insurgent networks for intelligence gathering. Kitson’s pseudo groups devastated the Mau Mau and were far more effective than the aerial bombardment and massive conventional sweeps that preceded their employment.<sup>178</sup>

Kitson used his extensive experience of using pseudo operations against the Mau Mau as a template for executing operations in Malaya, where the colonial government battled a communist insurgency from 1948–1960.<sup>179</sup> According to Arquilla, the communist guerrillas were “almost completely unable to cope with this new approach to fighting them.”<sup>180</sup> By 1960, Kitson and the British had quelled the guerrilla problem in Malaya and developed and proven a new doctrinal approach that would soon be mimicked in the 1965–1980 Rhodesian Bush War by a special operations unit known as the Selous Scouts.<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> Maloba, *Mau Mau and Kenya*, Introduction.

<sup>177</sup> Arquilla, *Insurgents, Raiders, and Bandits*, 218.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, 219.

<sup>179</sup> O’Ballance, *Malaya*, 13.

<sup>180</sup> Arquilla, *Insurgents, Raiders, and Bandits*, 221.

<sup>181</sup> Baxter, *Selous Scouts: Rhodesian Counter-Insurgency Specialists*, 7.

## B. THE RHODESIAN CIVIL WAR

The Rhodesian Civil War was a bloody conflict between a white minority ruling government and communist insurgencies in southern Africa from 1965–1980.<sup>182</sup> Fearing that the British government was planning to transfer power of the colony to majority rule, the Rhodesian government's issued a Unilateral Declaration of Independence on November 11, 1965, formally cutting colonial ties with the British. Britain and the United States resisted the UDI's bid for independence; they immediately ceased trade with the Rhodesians and vowed not to recognize the white minority government.<sup>183</sup> Neighboring African states also feared that the Rhodesians would exert greater influence in southern Africa following the declaration and, therefore, were wary of their independence.

The bid for Rhodesian independence triggered an African insurgency that sought to overthrow the isolated white Rhodesian government. The African bid for independence was led by the Zimbabwe African Peoples Union (ZAPU), which was run by Joshua Nkomo. The ZAPU developed a military wing to fight the Rhodesian security forces known as the Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA), which was grounded in a Soviet styled Marxist-Leninist ideology.<sup>184</sup> Another party, the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU), led by Robert Mugabe, also had a militant wing known as the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA). This militia followed a Maoist ideology.<sup>185</sup>

Each militant wing established its own safe havens. ZIPRA focused their efforts on developing a conventional force based on advice from the Soviets and were headquartered in Zambia.<sup>186</sup> ZANLA focused their efforts on the tribes of Rhodesia for a safe haven; these tribes populated isolated vast expanses of terrain in the north. ZANLA

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<sup>182</sup> Ibid.

<sup>183</sup> Robert C. Good, *U.D.I.: The International Politics of the Rhodesian Rebellion* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1973), 23.

<sup>184</sup> James E. Dornan, *Rhodesia Alone* (Washington, DC: Council on American Affairs, 1977), 43.

<sup>185</sup> Baxter, *Selous Scouts: Rhodesian Counter-Insurgency Specialists*, 9.

<sup>186</sup> J. R. T. Wood, "Rhodesian Insurgency," *Memories of Rhodesia, Inc.*, <http://www.memoriesofrhodesia.com/media/documents/insurgency-1.pdf>.

sought to exploit the small size of the Rhodesian security apparatus, where the white population of Rhodesia in 1965 was a meager 250,000.<sup>187</sup> Historian Peter Baxter contends, “Bearing in mind the size of the country, and despite a continuing reliance on the black rank and file, there were simply too few whites to be in all places at once. The revised guerrilla strategy sought to exploit this signature weakness.”<sup>188</sup>

ZANLA insurgents methodically infiltrated villages and subverted the populace by establishing political commissars to establish a foothold amongst the indigenous population. The commissars would set up camps within local villages and would appeal to the tribesman with a clever nationalist ideology and revolutionary rhetoric, garnering popular support within the ungoverned bush territories.<sup>189</sup> The popular support they established within these geographically isolated areas became demographic safe havens for the African guerrillas where native tribesman had an indigenous power structure and governance that supported the insurgency and circumvented security forces.<sup>190</sup> Rhodesian security forces found it nearly impossible to gather intelligence within these isolated areas and struggled to prevent the spread of the revolutionary ideology.

Through the political commissars, the terrorists would also establish local “contactmen,” who facilitated logistics and infiltration of new terrorists into a safe haven from neighboring Mozambique.<sup>191</sup> The contactmen would also collect intelligence on security forces, select safe sites, and serve as the conduit to pass messages between different insurgent units throughout the area as well as across the border. ZANLA established a network of underground contacts and auxiliary conduits to slowly and quietly cement their ideology within the rural population of Rhodesia, killing any indigenous opposition or political opponents.<sup>192</sup> Baxter argues that, once the safe havens were in place, “Now incoming insurgents were able to simply merge with receptive local

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<sup>187</sup> Baxter, *Selous Scouts: Rhodesian Counter-Insurgency Specialists*, 9.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid.

<sup>189</sup> Ron Reid Daly and Peter Stiff, *Selous Scouts: Top Secret War* (London: Galago, 1983), 76.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid., 77.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid.

<sup>192</sup> Baxter, *Selous Scouts: Rhodesian Counter-Insurgency Specialists*, 9.

populations in the Tribal Trust Lands, the so-called native reserves, and remain effectively invisible.”<sup>193</sup> Establishing support amongst the local population, therefore, was key to ZANLA’s efforts to defeat the small but tactically superior Rhodesian security forces. ZANLA’s overall strategy was to slowly garner massive popular support and couple this support with crippling sanctions from western countries to eventually cause the political and economic collapse of the white minority regime.<sup>194</sup>

Rhodesian security forces were somewhat oblivious to the subversive efforts of both ZANLA and ZIPRA until attacks began to take place in northern Rhodesia and local populations were unwilling to provide information to security forces. The Rhodesians recognized that the lack of intelligence regarding the insurgents was indicative that the “local population was siding with the revolution, hearts and minds were being lost.”<sup>195</sup>

### **C. SELOUS SCOUTS ARE BORN**

The Selous Scouts of Rhodesia were a Special Forces unit primarily composed of white Rhodesian NCOs and Officers, who led teams of “turned” African pseudo operators during the Rhodesian Bush War. The Rhodesian government used Selous Scouts to penetrate guerrilla safe havens, garner actionable intelligence, and relay the information to Rhodesian strike forces.<sup>196</sup> These strike forces were typically composed of Rhodesian Special Air Service, who had a “fraternal association with the iconic British SAS.”<sup>197</sup> The compartmented intelligence gathering and strike operations strategy provided anonymity to the pseudo operators and limited their chances of compromise to the guerrillas.<sup>198</sup>

The Selous Scouts charter was to clandestinely eliminate terrorists operating inside and outside of Rhodesia.<sup>199</sup> The Selous Scouts used the doctrine that Kitson had

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<sup>193</sup> Ibid.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid.

<sup>195</sup> Baxter, *Selous Scouts: Rhodesian Counter-Insurgency Specialists*, 9.

<sup>196</sup> Daly and Stiff. *Selous Scouts: Top Secret War*, 76.

<sup>197</sup> Baxter, *Selous Scouts: Rhodesian Counter-Insurgency Specialists*, 29.

<sup>198</sup> Daly and Stiff. *Selous Scouts: Top Secret War*, 76.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid., Foreword.



employed in Kenya and Malaya, but evolved the concept to include conducting lethal strikes, which changed the way pseudo operators had historically been employed. Spies argues,

The original techniques employed by the pseudo teams went against the guidance Kitson had used in Kenya. The teams attempted to not only gain intelligence on insurgents but also kill them. One recurring problem, the same problem that Kitson identified, was that pseudo operatives compromised themselves when they attempted to conduct offensive operations.<sup>200</sup>

The newly formed unit drew heavily from the Rhodesian Light Infantry and SAS personnel; in particular the unit wanted soldiers with experience as trackers.

General Peter Walls, Commander of the Rhodesian Army, took a vested interest in developing the Selous Scouts because the insurgency was growing and the “war was not going well.”<sup>201</sup> General Walls tapped Lieutenant Colonel Ron Reid Daly to form the new unit, convincing him to delay his retirement from the Army.<sup>202</sup> LTC Daly immediately began to piece together a handpicked staff to form the unit’s headquarters, but in his memoirs, Daly writes that there was one important gap he had to fill. “It was clear we had to get men, particularly African men, and we had to get them quickly so we could expand and become operational.”<sup>203</sup> Rhodesia, being a deeply segregated society, had a military that was not much different; the level of training and funding that whites received was significantly more than the African soldiers who served in the Rhodesian African Rifles.<sup>204</sup> LTC Daly decided that the Selous Scouts should receive special incentive pay similar to the all-white SAS units. Furthermore, African soldiers who were selected to join the Selous Scouts would be entitled to the same benefits as white soldiers, essentially doubling the salaries of African soldiers.<sup>205</sup> LTC Daly’s recruiting efforts paid off not only due to financial incentives, but also because of a new model of equality

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<sup>200</sup> Spies, *Pseudo Operations*, 94.

<sup>201</sup> Daly and Stiff, *Selous Scouts: Top Secret War*, 44.

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

not witnessed in Rhodesia or even in Africa. “I wanted to amalgamate the best of African customs with the best of the European customs...we’d have a very special sort of relationship between the races, of a type, at that time unknown in the Rhodesian Army.”<sup>206</sup>

LTC Daly developed a grueling physical and mental selection course that was designed to weed out men who lacked the stamina for the Selous Scouts’ unique mission. LTC Daly kept the unit’s charter completely secret from the trainees for operational security, and he led the trainees to believe that they were simply trying out for an elite tracker unit. This belief supported the operational cover the Selous Scouts had developed. After the successful completion of the selection course, LTC Daly held a meeting and informed the newest members what their real mission was:

We have all, I believe, experienced the frustrating difficulties in getting information from the local tribesmen who have been subverted by the terrorists. Now you are Africans ... imagine the problems that all-European units, like the Rhodesian Light Infantry, are experiencing. Now, we have discovered a new method of getting information from the subverted tribes people [sic] ... and you are the men who are going to get that information. You will not become ... as you had believed ... the Army trackers. Instead, we are going to turn you into terrorists ... freedom fighters ... the boys in the bush ... call them what you will ... and you are going to be far better freedom fighters than the real ones ever were. ... You will pretend to be ZANLA and ZIPRA terrorists and infiltrate the population ... and you will try to edge your way into the actual terrorist groups themselves. Now, perhaps you will understand why I was only looking for real men.<sup>207</sup>

LTC Daly was convinced that the Selous Scouts needed a completely different *modus operandi* than pseudo operations of the past. The Selous Scouts took lessons from early experiments conducted in November 1966, where the pseudo groups consisted of three to four men who were trained in bush craft but lacked the knowledge and counter insurgency experience to be convincing guerrillas.<sup>208</sup> Furthermore, the new formation of Selous Scouts was inherently different than the operations Kitson led in Malaya, or early

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<sup>206</sup> Ibid., 66.

<sup>207</sup> Daly and Peter, *Selous Scouts: Top Secret War*, 72.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid., 74.

Rhodesian experiments, where the “terrorists were tricked into meetings and then immediately attacked.”<sup>209</sup> LTC Daly writes: “The new role of the Selous Scouts, I instructed, would henceforth be to infiltrate the tribal population and the terrorist networks, pinpoint the terrorist camps and bases and then direct conventional forces in to carry out the actual attacks.”<sup>210</sup>

#### **D. “TERRORIZING THE TERRORIST”<sup>211</sup>**

The Selous Scouts took several measures aimed at avoiding being compromised while in action. The Scouts utilized a centralized command and control structure called Combined Operations (COMOPS), where the conventional Army and Air Force became a supporting effort and force provider to the Selous Scouts, thus providing Special Operations Commanders complete operational authority.<sup>212</sup> “The Rhodesians launched external operations spearheaded to a large extent by its special forces to ‘detect, destroy, delay, disrupt and deceive’ terrorists or guerrillas. In the end, Rhodesian special forces were the supported rather than a supporting effort.”<sup>213</sup> Furthermore, the Selous Scouts pseudo operators, in most instances, would relay intelligence information to conventional Rhodesian strike forces that would actually attack and destroy guerrilla formations and camps rather than the pseudo operators themselves.<sup>214</sup> This concept provided anonymity to the pseudo operators and limited their chances of compromise to the guerrillas and the locals within the terrorist safe havens.<sup>215</sup>

The Rhodesian Special Branch, which served as the Rhodesian police and intelligence apparatus, also served a significant role in supporting the Selous Scouts and their operations. The Special Branch acted as the lead for “turning” captured terrorist and

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<sup>209</sup> Ibid., 76.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid.

<sup>211</sup> Baxter, *Selous Scouts: Rhodesian Counter-Insurgency Specialists*, 29.

<sup>212</sup> Charles D. Melson, “Top Secret War: Rhodesian Special Operations,” *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 16, no. 1, (2005), 59.

<sup>213</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>214</sup> Daly and Stiff, *Selous Scouts: Top Secret War*, 76.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid.

reintegrating them into the Selous Scouts' formation.<sup>216</sup> The turning of terrorists was an extensive process that was critical to the success of the Selous Scouts, because they provided invaluable intelligence. The primary tactic that the Special Branch used was to bring formerly turned terrorists into interrogation and begin to establish rapport with the detainee and provide extensive medical care for them upon capture.<sup>217</sup> This care provided comfort to the detainee and demonstrated that his life could improve if he switched allegiance to the Rhodesian government. The alternative option was obviously not favorable because the captured terrorists would certainly be tried, convicted, and executed for crimes of terrorism.

Capturing terrorist was imperative to the Selous Scouts not only for intelligence gathering on guerrilla bands but as a means to populate the ranks of the pseudo teams. Daly and Stiff note, "If a terrorist group was attacked by Fireforce [SAS strike force] and all were killed with the exception of one or two prisoners, we could turn those prisoners and adopt the groups' identity, and function as them in an adjacent area sufficiently far enough away from any locals who could identify them."<sup>218</sup> Protecting the identities of turned terrorist was critical for operational security, but this task was not always achieved. However, the Selous Scouts still found use for the turned terrorist even when they had been compromised, by using him as a "rear rank instructor," providing information on "contactmen" and guerrilla bands in other areas.<sup>219</sup> According to Daly and Stiff, "We once had one man for example ... a Detachment Commander ... who although utterly compromised, still assisted positively in the capture of forty-six terrorists within a space of two weeks."<sup>220</sup>

The deep infiltration of the guerrilla network by the Selous Scouts provided targeting information for the strike forces and also sowed distrust amongst the guerrilla groups and caused the groups to target each other out of fear that they were actually

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<sup>216</sup> Ibid., 103.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid., 104.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid., 103.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid.

Selous Scouts. A captured terrorist “reported having been involved in ten firefights since infiltration into Rhodesia, but on checking his story out, we found only two had been with Rhodesian Security Forces...the rest had been with other ZANLA terrorist groups.”<sup>221</sup>

The Selous Scouts had to constantly assess and develop their tactics because the ZANLA/ZIPRA terrorists became aware of the pseudo tactic and would plan ambushes against the operators. Through the political commissars, the terrorists would establish local contactmen who would facilitate the logistics and infiltration of new terrorists into a safe haven from neighboring Mozambique.<sup>222</sup> The contactmen would also collect intelligence on security forces, select safe sites, and serve as the conduit to pass messages between different terror groups throughout the area as well as across the border.

The Selous Scouts recognized the importance of the contactmen and began to establish their own pseudo contactmen within operational areas to destabilize the situation and confuse the terrorists as to who they could truly trust. “Groups entering Rhodesia for the first time, found great difficulty in linking up with terrorist groups already operating in the areas to which they had been allotted. They became badly dispirited and demoralised [sic], particularly after being savagely attacked by other terrorists who were under the impression they were Selous Scouts.”<sup>223</sup>

The pseudo operations employed by the Selous Scouts were not without criticism. In August 1976, the Selous Scouts conducted a cross border raid into Mozambique killing over 1,000 ZANLA guerrillas inside a camp that was registered as a United Nations refugee camp.<sup>224</sup> Codenamed “Operation Eland,” the attack on the Nyadzonya Camp, which served as a logistics and training base for ZANLA terrorists, was conducted with remarkable stealth and precision.<sup>225</sup> The Selous Scouts disguised themselves and their convoy of vehicles as a Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO) convoy, a communist

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<sup>221</sup> Ibid., 125.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid., 77.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid., 125.

<sup>224</sup> Cline, *Pseudo Operations and Counterinsurgency*, 12.

<sup>225</sup> Daly and Stiff, *Selous Scouts: Top Secret War*, 178.

group fighting to liberate Mozambique from Portuguese rule.<sup>226</sup> The FRELIMO were actively supporting ZANLA combatants in Mozambique and both had established a base in Nyadzonya, which served as a training base for thousands of ZANLA guerrillas. The disguised Selous Scouts literally drove their convoy of pseudo operators through the front gate of the camp without being stopped by the unsuspecting guards.<sup>227</sup> “This vast human phalanx began to move forward and soon the vehicles were mobbed by cheering, ululating people. Clearly the population of the camp had no inkling whatsoever that this was a trap.”<sup>228</sup> A few moments later gunfire erupted and the Selous Scouts gunned down 1,028 ZANLA terrorists in the middle of the parade field of the camp.<sup>229</sup> Captured ZANLA documents in later operations revealed that 3,610 ZANLA members were wounded during the attack.<sup>230</sup> The Selous Scouts suffered five wounded and no casualties during the conduct of Operation Eland.<sup>231</sup> LTC Daly asserts that “the raid on the Nyadzonya/Pungwe base was, to my mind, the classic operation of the whole war ... carried out by only seventy two soldiers ... without air support ... and without a reserve of any kind.”<sup>232</sup>

The large body count and successful cross border operations that the Selous Scouts conducted proved to be militarily effective but had negative political impact for the Rhodesian government. The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) labeled the Nyadzonya base as a refugee camp in May 1976, three months prior to Operation Eland.<sup>233</sup> LTC Daly asserts that every UNHCR inspection of reported ZANLA and ZIPRA camps were coordinated well in advance to provide the appearance to inspectors that the guerrilla camp was indeed a refugee camp rather than a terrorist training base. “Needless to say, on those visits the camps would be full of old folk,

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<sup>226</sup> Baxter, *Selous Scouts: Rhodesian Counter-Insurgency Specialists*, 38.

<sup>227</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>228</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>229</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>230</sup> Daly and Stiff, *Selous Scouts: Top Secret War*, 220.

<sup>231</sup> *Ibid.*, 211.

<sup>232</sup> *Ibid.*, 215.

<sup>233</sup> *Ibid.*, 216.

women and children, the closest thing to a firearm seen would be a plough shear.”<sup>234</sup> An official ZANLA report captured on November 23, 1977 directly refutes the claims that the Nyadzonya base was a refugee camp; rather, the report unequivocally indicates that the base was a major terrorist training camp.<sup>235</sup>

Furthermore, ZANLA later facilitated an investigation by the UNHCR, which concluded that the attack on Nyadzonya was an atrocity committed against refugees who were living in a camp receiving United Nations aid.<sup>236</sup> The raid at Nyadzonya was tactically a remarkable success, but strategically the raid enabled the international community to denounce Rhodesia and isolate them further, precipitating negotiations to end the war.

In April 1979 the Rhodesian government and the black majority agreed to have new elections in order to facilitate the peace process in the war-ravaged country, resulting in the election of the first Black Prime Minister, Bishop Abel Muzorewa.<sup>237</sup> By December 28, 1979 a ceasefire was declared between Rhodesian security forces and the guerrillas, supervised by a British governor who “assumed authority over the colony in order to represent a return to legality and to preside over the transition to majority rule.”<sup>238</sup> Following the ceasefire a British Commonwealth force of 1,300 troops arrived in Rhodesia to assist in facilitating the peace process and supervised the consolidation of 15,370 guerrillas into “Assembly Points” by January 6, 1980.<sup>239</sup> Both guerrillas and Rhodesian security forces violated the ceasefire agreement on numerous occasions to include multiple failed assassination attempts on ZANU leader Robert Mugabe by suspected Selous Scouts.<sup>240</sup> Mugabe survived every attempt on his life and eventually won the 1980 Presidential election in a landslide. “As voting ended on 3 March it was

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<sup>234</sup> Ibid.

<sup>235</sup> Ibid., 217.

<sup>236</sup> Ibid., 216.

<sup>237</sup> Ibid., 421.

<sup>238</sup> Baxter, *Selous Scouts: Rhodesian Counter-Insurgency Specialists*, 60.

<sup>239</sup> Paul L. Moorcraft and Peter McLaughlin, *The Rhodesian War: A Military History* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2010), 171.

<sup>240</sup> Baxter, *Selous Scouts: Rhodesian Counter-Insurgency Specialists*, 60.

estimated that some 93 per cent [SIC] of eligible voters had cast a ballot. Sixty-three per cent [SIC] of those voted for Mugabe and his ZANU party.”<sup>241</sup> Following the election of Mugabe, the Rhodesian military was formally dissolved and every unit with the exception of the Selous Scouts received some form of ceremonial disbandment.<sup>242</sup>

#### **E. STRENGTHS AND LIMITS OF PSEUDO OPERATIONS**

Gaining access to the demographic safe havens of ZANLA and ZIPRA guerrillas was a significant problem for Rhodesian security forces. Accessing the demographic sanctuaries in Rhodesia, therefore, became paramount for the government to counter not only the guerrillas but also the pervasive ideology that was sweeping through the rural African tribes. The Rhodesians realized that they needed to access the denied areas and the African tribal population; the Selous Scouts were the solution. The pseudo operators of the Selous Scouts provided the Rhodesians with a strategy to access demographically denied areas to develop intelligence, direct strike operations, and disrupt the terrorist network from within.

Another important lesson learned in the Rhodesian war was that indigenous populations have unparalleled importance in assisting terrorist groups to develop safe havens. Tribal and ethnic ties compound the problem and provide terror groups the opportunity to freely operate, recruit, and train within geographic and demographic safe havens. The level of subversion that terror groups achieve within the safe haven is indicative of the influence terror groups have exerted over the local population.<sup>243</sup> Gathering intelligence regarding terror networks within the safe haven becomes nearly impossible when the terrorist have developed complete control over the population and locals become very unlikely to provide information to security forces.<sup>244</sup> Pseudo operations are arguably the best tactic to access these denied areas. Pseudo operations provide an avenue to effectively target terrorist groups when the population is adamantly

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<sup>241</sup> Ibid., 62.

<sup>242</sup> Ibid.

<sup>243</sup> Daly and Stiff, *Selous Scouts: Top Secret War*, 75.

<sup>244</sup> Ibid.



sympathetic to the insurgency. Pseudo operations may be the initial strategy to gather intelligence and degrade terrorist safe havens, but the host nation government will eventually have to make inroads with the local population to achieve a lasting peace.

Third, the value of preserving a pseudo group's operational cover cannot be overstated because of the time and training needed to develop effective operators. Although the Rhodesians found effective uses for compromised operators, the strategic utility of a pseudo group that is compromised could jeopardize the use of the groups in the future. Widespread compromise could limit pseudo operators' ability to have success in deeply penetrating terrorist networks. However, employing pseudo operators in a direct action role can be beneficial in targeting the network and maintaining a light footprint within a safe haven, where employing overt strike forces will cause political backlash or further foment negative popular sentiment.

Finally, a war of attrition strategy must be coupled with a robust population centric effort aimed to counter the insurgency's pervasive ideology. In Rhodesia, ZANLA and ZIPRA terrorists methodically infiltrated villages and subverted the populace by establishing political commissars to establish a foothold amongst the indigenous population. The commissars would set up camps within local villages and would appeal to the tribesman with a clever nationalist ideology and revolutionary rhetoric, garnering popular support within the ungoverned bush territories.<sup>245</sup> The popular support that was established within these geographically isolated areas also became demographic safe havens for the guerrillas, where only native tribesman and locally recruited guerrillas could operate. The white minority Rhodesian government did little to win over the indigenous tribes and instead simply targeted them with kinetic strikes.

Rhodesian security forces found it nearly impossible to gather intelligence within these isolated areas and struggled to prevent the spread of the revolutionary ideology until the development of the Selous Scouts and the pseudo tactic. Although the Selous Scouts were extremely effective at targeting and killing ZANLA and ZIPRA terrorists,

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<sup>245</sup> Ibid., 76.

the Rhodesian government never achieved popular support to counter the spread of the insurgency. “Until the very end of the war, ‘body counts’ and ‘kill ratios’ continued to preoccupy Rhodesian officers and public opinion. They had learned little from the American experience in Vietnam.”<sup>246</sup> Although the attrition strategy was tactically successful, it could not be implemented indefinitely while the Rhodesian government suffered sanctions and widespread disapproval from super powers like the United States.

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<sup>246</sup> Moorcraft and McLaughlin, *The Rhodesian War*, 63.

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## VI. SONS OF IRAQ

Incentivizing key stakeholders while also threatening those who are not supportive of military operations abroad is a strategy that the United States has employed in the past. As described in chapter two, the strategy seeks to create an inhospitable place for terrorists where the local population and indigenous security forces directly and indirectly counter terrorist groups, mitigating the need for occupying forces to actively provide security for the area. At the root of the strategy is securing the support of the population; without popular support neither the terrorist nor the counter-terrorist can be successful. Political scientist Austin Long describes this form of patronage as “when an external power becomes involved in the provision of internal security to a state. This presents the possibility of a three-way relationship among tribe, state and external power that can produce many complications.”<sup>247</sup>

The strategy of co-opting surrogate security forces has been implemented at the micro-level to secure population centers and at the state level to maintain peace. “American forces employed variants of surrogate warfare from their frontier battles in the Western plains, the Philippine insurrection, the Nicaraguan incursions, and the Vietnam War. The Iraq War, however, re-catalyzed interest in COIN techniques and in the usage of host-country manpower.”<sup>248</sup> In particular, this indirect approach to countering terrorist safe havens can take on two different forms: defensive and offensive.<sup>249</sup> The defensive approach is one where U.S. forces are working in concert with indigenous security forces to not only counter threats to the government, but also improve upon the underlying grievances that may have caused the insurgency.<sup>250</sup> The offensive form of this approach, according to political scientist Thomas Henriksen, “is far easier to execute than its defensive counterpart. It usually translates into a more limited and briefer

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<sup>247</sup> Long, “The Anbar Awakening,” 72.

<sup>248</sup> Thomas H. Henriksen. *Afghanistan, Counterinsurgency, and the Indirect Approach* (Joint Special Operations Report [JSOU] Report 10-3) (Hurlbert Field, FL: JSOU, April 2010), 3.

<sup>249</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>250</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

military, political, and economic presence by U.S. armed forces.”<sup>251</sup> The offensive form was witnessed during the 1980’s when the U.S. supported the mujahedeen against the Soviet Union, the contras in Nicaragua in the 1980s and 1990s, and again in 2001 when a limited number of U.S. Special Forces (USSF) supported the Northern Alliance in overthrowing the Taliban regime and Al Qaeda’s safe haven.<sup>252</sup>

A more recent example of this strategy is U.S. forces’ financing, supplying and training of the Sons of Iraq in Al Anbar province, Iraq, where Al Qaeda in Iraq had established a safe haven. Al Anbar province, in western Iraq, is a Sunni dominated region that enjoyed power and influence during the reign of Saddam Hussein and quickly became disenfranchised after the U.S. led invasion and expulsion of the regime. Exploiting newly found grievances, AQI established roots within the restive province and used the tribally governed space as a safe haven to recruit, train, and launch terrorist attacks.

This chapter analyzes the development of an AQI safe haven within Al Anbar Province, and the insurgency that led Iraqi society to the brink of civil war in the midst of Operation Iraqi Freedom. This chapter will illuminate the advantages and disadvantages of co-opting surrogate security forces akin to the SOI, and illustrate the viability of the strategy to disrupt or defeat terrorist safe havens.

#### **A. SUNNIS IN IRAQ’S ANBAR PROVINCE**

Iraq is a diverse country that is composed primarily of three different groups of people; Sunni Arabs, Shia Arabs, and the Kurds, who are also Sunni. The Sunni Arab minority in Iraq is primarily dispersed throughout the western and northern provinces of Al Anbar, Salah Ad Din, and Ninawa. The Kurds predominately populate the northern provinces of Arbil, Dahuk, Kirkuk, and parts of Ninawa. The Shia majority dominates southern Iraq in the provinces of Basra, Najaf, Wasit, and Maysan. The capital, Baghdad, is a diverse metropolis where Sunni and Shia amalgamate and where the Shia dominated central government sits.

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<sup>251</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>252</sup> Henriksen, *Afghanistan, Counterinsurgency*, 13.

The former regime led by Saddam Hussein, along with his Baath party, was disproportionately Sunni Arab and favored the sect in every aspect of governance. In addition to favoring Sunnis, the Baath party made extensive efforts to minimize tribal influence on governmental affairs through land appropriation reforms that separated the agrarian population from the sheikhs that controlled them.<sup>253</sup> Although the Baath party adamantly wanted to change the power structure of Iraq, the tribes influenced Saddam Hussein significantly, and he overwhelmingly appointed members of his own Albu Nasir tribe to key government positions.<sup>254</sup> This strategy allowed Saddam to maintain his authoritarian rule without having to use military forces in rural areas.<sup>255</sup> He showered specific tribal leaderships with money, weapons, and land, further legitimizing the tribal chieftains prominence to maintain their loyalty.<sup>256</sup>

The United States toppled the Sunni-dominated regime following the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003. Sunni tribal sheikhs lost significant influence due to their prominent roles in the Ba'ath Party.<sup>257</sup> This loss of power significantly impacted the security situation; Sunni men not only resented the U.S. occupation, they were adamantly opposed to the fledgling Shia dominated Iraqi government, resisting both with violence.

From the lens of Long's 'Tribal-State Security Relations' model, described in chapter two, Saddam Hussein used a combination of state and auxiliary tribalism to maintain control of Iraq.<sup>258</sup> State-tribalism "occurs when one group seeks to dominate the state's security apparatus by commingling tribal networks with the formal state structure."<sup>259</sup> Saddam Hussein asserted this form of tribalism by appointing his fellow tribesmen into positions of power within the state's security forces. Long argues that,

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<sup>253</sup> Amatzia Baram, "Neo-Tribalism in Iraq: Saddam Hussein's Tribal Policies 1991-96," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 29, no. 1 (February 1997), 3.

<sup>254</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>255</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>256</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>257</sup> W. Andrew Terrill, *Lessons of the Iraqi De-Ba'athification Program for Iraq's Future and the Arab Revolutions*, (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2012), 10.

<sup>258</sup> Long, "The Anbar Awakening," 76.

<sup>259</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.

due to extensive military losses from the Iraq-Iran war, coupled with the degradation of state wealth and social programs, Saddam was compelled to have a greater reliance on loyal tribes to maintain influence and security throughout Iraq.<sup>260</sup> Saddam even went so far as to embrace full auxiliary tribalism in areas where tribal sheikhs developed their own private armies and tribal customs governed the area.<sup>261</sup>

This delegation of power to tribal authorities not only granted them formal authority but also enhanced their ability to seek extra-legal sources of additional revenue from smuggling (particularly lucrative as Iraq was under United Nations sanctions), government corruption and kickbacks, and even outright extortion and hijacking.<sup>262</sup>

Thus, the Sunni tribes of Al Anbar enjoyed prestige and, perhaps more importantly, financial benefits from this autonomy, which quickly came to an end with the U.S. led invasion in 2003.

The U.S. policy of de-ba'athification, in particular, hit Sunni tribes the hardest, alienated once powerful tribes, and enabled conditions for terrorists to exploit the divide between Sunni tribes, U.S. forces, and a fledgling Iraqi government led by Shias. "An order to de-Ba'athify[sic] Iraqi society was the first major official act of Ambassador L. Paul Bremer upon his arrival in that country to assume control of the newly created Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA)."<sup>263</sup> This order effectively targeted the top four layers of leadership of the former government, created a rewards system for information leading to the capture of former Ba'ath leaders and also banned future government employment of former Ba'ath members.<sup>264</sup>

Shortly after the first order directing de-ba'athification, Bremer issued CPA Order 2 on May 23, 2003, dissolving the Iraqi military and intelligence services.<sup>265</sup> De-

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<sup>260</sup> Ibid., 74.

<sup>261</sup> Long, "The Anbar Awakening," 75.

<sup>262</sup> Ibid.

<sup>263</sup> Terrill, *Lessons of the Iraqi De-Ba'athification*, 13.

<sup>264</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>265</sup> Ibid., 15.

ba'athification and disbanding the Iraqi military affected an estimated 50,000 people.<sup>266</sup> Members of the Ba'ath party were all treated as threats to the future of Iraq and these directives affected a significant portion of the Sunni minority, all of whom sought jobs within the government sector that required Ba'ath membership.<sup>267</sup> W. Andrew Terrill argues that this broad sweeping policy against the Ba'ath party appeared to the Sunni minority as a "de-sunnization" intended to empower the newly minted Shia led government in Baghdad.<sup>268</sup>

Terrill further contends that the CPA decisions regarding de-Ba'athification and disbanding the military were "the building blocks of the insurgency and provided it with the organizational capacity to create that insurgency."<sup>269</sup> These policies therefore helped set the stage for a demographic safe haven among the disenfranchised Sunnis for the newly emerging Al Qaeda in Iraq.

## **B. THE RISE OF AL QAEDA IN IRAQ**

The Sunni tribes of Al Anbar province were an essential demographic among which AQI could coalesce and establish a terrorist safe haven. From this demographic strong hold, AQI could then wage jihad against an occupying U.S. military and Shia dominated government. Moreover, Al Anbar's expansive desert, long porous border with Syria, and natural ratline of the Euphrates River Valley served as an exceptional geographic safe haven. Jordanian born jihadist and AQI leader, Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi stated, "the rise of the Al-Qaida in Mesopotamia Organization was built on the shoulders of the Sunnis in Iraq...it is thanks to the Sunni tribesman that the Organization [i.e., Al-Qaida] owes its existence."<sup>270</sup>

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<sup>266</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>267</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>268</sup> Terrill, *Lessons of the Iraqi De-Ba'athification*, 24.

<sup>269</sup> Ibid., 58.

<sup>270</sup> Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi, interview by the Media Section of Al-Qaida in Mesopotamia, "Hiwar ma Al-Shaykh Abi Musab Al-Zarqawi" (Interview with Shaykh Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi), 1427/January 2006–June 2006, cited in Norman Cigar, *Al Qaeda, the Tribes, and the Government: Lessons and Prospects for Iraq's Unstable Triangle* (Quantico, VA: Marine Corps University Press, 2011), 6.



Prior to the invasion in 2003, Al Qaeda central, based in Afghanistan and Pakistan, had few, if any, operatives in Iraq.<sup>271</sup> According to Cigar, at the core of Al-Zarqawi's strategy to garner Iraqi support, was the plan to drive a wedge between tribal loyalties and his recruits by attracting new members through their Islamic faith.<sup>272</sup>

Recognizing the importance of the Sunni tribes within Al Anbar province, AQI sought to sow a deeper resentment between the tribes, central government, and U.S. military to sway support of the populace and cement AQI's demographic safe haven. The initial safe haven that Zarqawi and AQI carved out was within the city of Fallujah, which served as a magnet for Iraqi and foreign jihadist in 2004. U.S. Marines destroyed this safe haven when they all but demolished the city during Operation Al Fajr (New Dawn) in November 2004.<sup>273</sup>

With the loss of Fallujah as a sanctuary, AQI sought to regroup in the city of Al Qaim along the border with Syria. Seeking refuge in Al Qaim provided AQI with a "lucrative smuggling route for black market goods, and was AQI's lifeline to Baghdad as foreign fighters, money, and other resources that fueled the insurgency infiltrated Iraq."<sup>274</sup> The tribes of Al Qaim welcomed AQI terrorists with the viewpoint they were assisting fellow Muslims in the defense of Iraq from foreign invaders.<sup>275</sup> AQI offered to partner with tribes in the area to expel U.S. forces and also garnered support by promising money and jihad to preserve tribal honor and their religion.<sup>276</sup> As Michael Innes notes, "terrorist space depends on collusion with its host society, terrorism like piracy is a complex system dependent for its functioning on mutually supportive arrangements between agents and abettors."<sup>277</sup>

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<sup>271</sup> Cigar, *Al Qaeda, the Tribes*, 6.

<sup>272</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>273</sup> John R. Ballard, *Fighting for Fallujah: A New Dawn for Iraq* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2006), 53.

<sup>274</sup> William Knarr et al., "Al Sahawa: An Awakening in Al Qaim," *Combat Terrorism Exchange* 3, no. 2 (May 2013), 6.

<sup>275</sup> Ibid.

<sup>276</sup> Ibid.

<sup>277</sup> Innes. *Denial of Sanctuary*, 86.

Cigar notes that the human terrain of Al Anbar was critical to AQI in their operations but ultimately AQI's ideology and unrealistic policies would backfire.<sup>278</sup> AQI quickly pursued policies for the local populace that were grounded in an extreme interpretation of shari'a law and exercised broad authority over the tribal society using religion as justification for brutal acts of murder.<sup>279</sup> AQI exploited Sunnis in Al Anbar for their gain by skimming profits from prevalent smuggling operations that the tribal chiefs enjoyed prior to their arrival. Long argues: "perhaps most importantly, al-Qaeda in Mesopotamia [AQI] was competing for control of revenue sources—such as banditry and smuggling—that had long been the province of the tribes."<sup>280</sup> AQI also tried to strengthen ties with the tribes through forced marriages between women of Al Qaim to AQI fighters.<sup>281</sup> Cigar claims: "Al-Qaida increasingly appeared to threaten the tribal shaykhs' autonomy and authority by its control over local economic activity and by its intrusive presence in all social interactions, the levers on which tribal shaykhs relied to affect their power."<sup>282</sup>

In addition to these tactics, AQI engaged in acts of barbarism that turned the population against the organization. In May 2005, the police chief of the town Husaybah, in the Al Qaim district, was shot and beheaded in the street by AQI terrorists.<sup>283</sup> This brutal terrorist act mobilized the Albu-Mahal tribe to initiate an uprising against AQI.<sup>284</sup> That same year, the Albu-Mahal tribe conducted an offensive against AQI in the town of Husaybah and devastated their presence. After clearing Husbayah of terrorists, the tribe "began reconstructing damaged sections of the city and established tribal security around

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<sup>278</sup> Cigar, *Al Qaeda, the Tribes*, 5.

<sup>279</sup> Knarr et al., "Al Sahawa," 6.

<sup>280</sup> Long, "The Anbar Awakening," 77.

<sup>281</sup> Knarr et al., "Al Sahawa," 6.

<sup>282</sup> Cigar, *Al Qaeda, the Tribes*, 10.

<sup>283</sup> Knarr et al., "Al Sahawa," 5.

<sup>284</sup> Ibid.

critical infrastructure such as government buildings and services.”<sup>285</sup> The success of the tribe, however, was short lived. AQI counter-attacked by recruiting thousands of fighters from other areas to assault the powerful tribe.<sup>286</sup>

In late July 2005, the tribe reached out to the U.S. Marines for help because thousands of AQI fighters, led by Al-Zarqawi, had amassed in the Al Qaim district to destroy the Albu-Mahal tribe.<sup>287</sup> Albu-Mahal’s overture presented another seam that U.S. forces could exploit between AQI and the population. The alliance of tribesmen and U.S. forces would not come to fruition until October 2005, when the Marines and United States Army Special Forces partnered with members of the Albu-Mahal tribe to launch Operation Iron Fist and Operation Steel Curtain to retake the Al Qaim district.<sup>288</sup> By late November the Marines, USSF, and tribesmen had retaken the district and occupied key areas with Iraqi security forces to prevent a resurgence of AQI.<sup>289</sup> In essence, U.S. forces had created a “Circle of Trust” with the Albu-Mahal tribe that included the mayor, Iraqi security forces, and coalition forces, but at the center of this partnership was the sheikh of the tribe.<sup>290</sup>

This newfound partnership between U.S. forces and the Albu-Mahal tribe was in sharp contrast to CPA officials who felt that tribal authority was out of date and would only hold back the country from its new democratic destiny.<sup>291</sup> A strategic change in policy did not gain traction until late in 2006, when the country was engulfed in a complex and robust insurgency.<sup>292</sup> William Knarr argues: “AQI gave the Coalition and GOI [Government of Iraq] an opportunity to change the balance in their favor and under their terms.”<sup>293</sup>

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<sup>285</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>286</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>287</sup> Ibid.

<sup>288</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>289</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>290</sup> Knarr et al., “Al Sahawa,” 21.

<sup>291</sup> Cigar, *Al Qaeda, the Tribes*, 33.

<sup>292</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>293</sup> Knarr et al., “Al Sahawa,” 12.

### C. THE CREATION OF THE SONS OF IRAQ

The development of the SOI was initially slow, due in part to the CPA's resistance to empowering tribal leaders and, in part, to skepticism amongst the tribes. Cigar notes: "The tribes had limited interest- or in some cases downright hostility- for the United States' original declared policy objectives of promoting democracy, a market economy, human rights, women's equality, and establishing relations with Israel."<sup>294</sup> Cigar further asserts that although the tribes lacked common ground regarding strategic U.S. objectives, they shared a common disdain for AQI, which was ransacking Iraqi society.<sup>295</sup> The relationship between U.S. forces and the SOI matured over time and became official in "September 2006, when a number of shaykhs willing to commit their tribes to cooperation with the United States in the fight against Al-Qaida went public."<sup>296</sup>

The success of the SOI in Al Qaim spread throughout Al Anbar province; tribal sheikhs and U.S. money developed militias and combat power when needed. Ultimately, the tentative partnership between U.S. forces and Sunni tribal sheikhs became known as the "Awakening, or Al Sahawa."<sup>297</sup> Sheikh Abdul Sattar Abu Risha, who coined the term, led a "lower-tier" tribe in Ramadi that joined with the Albu-Mahal tribe of Al Qaim to fight AQI in 2006.<sup>298</sup> By March 2008, just two short years after the first emergence of SOI militia, there were 91,000 thousand tribesmen serving in the militia throughout the Sunni areas of Iraq and over 24,000 had joined the police of Al Anbar province.<sup>299</sup>

Notably, USSF also partnered with the local tribesmen to counter the expansion of AQI as early as February 2004. A USSF Operational Detachment-Alpha (ODA) 555, contacted members of the Albu Nimr tribe, who lived near the town of Hit in Al Anbar.<sup>300</sup> The ODA initially developed a relationship with low-level tribesmen and

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<sup>294</sup> Cigar, *Al Qaeda, the Tribes*, 35.

<sup>295</sup> Ibid.

<sup>296</sup> Ibid.

<sup>297</sup> Knarr et al., "Al Sahawa," 22.

<sup>298</sup> Ibid.

<sup>299</sup> Cigar, *Al Qaeda, the Tribes*, 36.

<sup>300</sup> Brent Lindeman, "Inside Anbar," *Combat Terrorism Exchange* 3, no. 2 (May 2013), 32.

infused money and civil affairs projects into the district, knowing that this would persuade tribal sheikhs to meet with the ODA.<sup>301</sup> This approach was different than the relationship that was developed by the Marines in Al Qaim; the tribe was not seeking U.S. support out of fear of being decimated by AQI in Hit, but rather was hoping to prosper from the partnership. Subsequent ODAs fostered and maintained this relationship.

In October 2005, ODA 545 worked to establish the tribal militia as a scout element for operations and called them “Desert Protectors.”<sup>302</sup> The ODA developed a 30-day training program for the tribesmen in Fallujah, aimed at training 200 members but only 30 actually attended formal training.<sup>303</sup> This training and employment of the militia, although small, was successful and the ODA partnered with the Desert Protectors to counter the threats of AQI in Hit.

Other ODAs similarly worked with Iraqi security forces like the Police and Army to employ Anbari tribesmen against AQI. The development of the SOI was distinctly different in each area of Al Anbar because there was not a blueprint for how to implement the strategy. Every tribe was seemingly different, just like every ODA or Marine unit with a different *modus operandi*. Major Brent Lindeman, a USSF ODA commander in Hit notes: “The Awakening movements in Al Qaim, Baghdadi, Hit, and Ramadi were not independent events, and yet the ways the Awakening manifested itself in these locations differed a great deal.”<sup>304</sup> The one consistent factor across the strategy was that it required a willing and able tribe to participate in the effort.

The success in Al Anbar was replicated throughout Sunni areas of Iraq and U.S. forces began to funnel money to the militias, paying recruits, and even went so far as to provide personal security against AQI for a number of tribal sheikhs who controlled the militias, including helicopter air support.<sup>305</sup> This support not only bolstered the ranks of

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<sup>301</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>302</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>303</sup> Ibid.

<sup>304</sup> Lindeman, “Inside Anbar,” 71.

<sup>305</sup> Cigar, *Al Qaeda, the Tribes*, 41.

the SOI militia, but it emboldened the tribal sheikhs who had lost their sense of status after the collapse of the regime. Following the Awakening, tribal leaders were directing their kinsman to not only denounce AQI, but to actively fight them along with U.S. forces that had previously been seen as the enemy.

The SOI strategy was remarkably successful but uneven as certain areas took longer to secure than others; this rate of progress can be attributed to multiple factors, including the geography of Anbar, enemy strength, resources of the tribes, and most importantly, the willingness of the tribe to shoulder the effort. Cigar acknowledges the overall success of the SOI by noting: “Monthly attack levels in Al-Anbar had declined from 1,350 in October 2006 to slightly over 200 in August 2007...by summer 2007, Al-Anbar had been largely secured.”<sup>306</sup>

#### **D. STRENGTHS AND LIMITS OF THE SURROGATE APPROACH**

Several factors contributed to the success of the SOI program. First, without securing the support of local leadership the strategy would have failed. Through the SOI, the sheikhs in Anbar could enjoy their renewed sense of authority, but more importantly they regained their financial windfall from their new alliance with the United States. For example, reconstruction projects were growing at an astronomical rate due to the new security environment and, by May 2009, U.S forces spent \$1.8 billion in Al Anbar alone.<sup>307</sup>

Second, U.S.-instigated strengthening of tribal leaders and their followers greatly assisted in countering AQI. A unified tribal effort hindered AQI recruitment efforts throughout the province, to the point that AQI sought to create its own “pro Al-Qaida tribally based forces.”<sup>308</sup> The counter-Sahawa attempt was not designed to supplant the current SOI, but rather provide a counter-balance militia that would protect AQI operatives and be sympathetic to their jihadist ideology. Cigar notes that although this

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<sup>306</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>307</sup> Cigar, *Al Qaeda, the Tribes*, 40.

<sup>308</sup> Ibid., 56.

AQI initiative was unrealistic, “what it does underscore is Al-Qaida’s acceptance of the reality of the continuity and strength of tribal cohesion and of the necessity of accommodating it.”<sup>309</sup>

However this consolidation and preferential treatment also came at a cost of greater instability between tribes.<sup>310</sup> An Anbar Sheikh named Ali Hatim argued that Sheikh Sattar, in particular, had become too powerful and received preferential treatment from U.S. forces.<sup>311</sup> In fact, U.S. forces inadvertently disrupted the tribal status quo by empowering some sheikhs who may have not risen to prominence in the absence of the U.S. occupation.

Third, the Awakening and SOI program forced AQI to create a new anti-tribal narrative. AQI leadership scolded tribal leaders in communiqués claiming that anti-Al Qaeda sheikhs were apostates and leading mercenaries against Islam.<sup>312</sup> AQI felt a significant threat to the survival of their organization due to the SOI, and blamed the U.S. success on the allure of money that the tribes received.<sup>313</sup> Cigar notes: “Al-Qaida, of course, fought back as best it could in what now had become a deperate [sic] contest for survival in a hostile environment.”<sup>314</sup> Even Osama Bin Laden sought to change the narrative in Iraq, albeit by taking a different tone than the AQI leadership, by appealing to the tribal leaders to maintain their allegiance to the jihad.<sup>315</sup> Bin Laden made a concerted effort to appeal to the tribes in 2007, “speaking to them as ‘our beloved awesome tribes,’ promising that they would be rewarded on Judgment Day if they remained loyal.”<sup>316</sup>

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<sup>309</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>310</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>311</sup> Ibid., 43.

<sup>312</sup> Ibid., 49.

<sup>313</sup> Ibid., 51.

<sup>314</sup> Ibid., 52.

<sup>315</sup> Cigar, *Al Qaeda, the Tribes*, 50.

<sup>316</sup> Usama Bin Ladin, “Ila ahlina bi’l-Iraq” (To Our People in Iraq), October 2010, <http://www.muslim.net/vb/showthread.php?page=6&t=259268>., cited in Norman Cigar, *Al Qaeda, the Tribes, and the Government: Lessons and Prospects for Iraq’s Unstable Triangle* (Quantico, VA: Marine Corps University Press, 2011), 50.

Along similar lines, AQI was forced to adapt their strategy to try to counter SOI. Following the death of AQI's leader Abu Musab Al Zarqawi in 2006, AQI instilled a new leader, an Iraqi named Abu Umar Al-Baghdadi, who would lead the rebranded Islamic State of Iraq (ISI).<sup>317</sup> This rebranding provided an inherently Iraqi face on the organization that would be more inclusive of the tribes and prevent the egregious offenses that Zarqawi directed against the locals. Even with the rebranding and new Iraqi leadership, AQI struggled to maintain influence and operational effectiveness as long as the SOI were intact, evidenced by the fact that entire Iraqi AQI units switched allegiance and joined the SOI as a means of survival rather than personal sentiment.<sup>318</sup>

Fourth, the Awakening successfully turned the population against AQI through a tribal uprising that rallied the Sunnis to not only reject AQI's extremist ideology, but also partner with U.S. forces to secure their towns. The new reality on the ground in Iraq after the SOI was one where AQI lost the support of the populous and as a result lost their safe haven from which they thrived. U.S. forces provided necessary combat power and money to create a safe space for the tribes to regain control of their towns within Al Anbar without the repression of AQI operating from a sanctuary. The development of local security forces composed of local tribal members, backed by the coalition, provided a positive perception to the population of U.S. forces and countered the narrative painted by AQI. The SOI concept also created jobs for unemployed Sunnis who previously had no other options besides joining the insurgency that paid for attacks against U.S. and Iraqi forces. After failing to rally the population to their side, AQI units fled east to Samarra because the environment had become so inhospitable to the group.<sup>319</sup> The success of the SOI in Al Qaim spread to other areas beyond Al Anbar province, including other Sunni dominated cities like Tikrit, which had been insurgent hotbeds. Overall, this strategy created an environment that not only provided jobs and security, but also re-legitimized tribal leaders who lost power after de-ba'athification, all of which gained the support of the people. The fledgling central government lacked the ability to govern outside of

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<sup>317</sup> Cigar, *Al Qaeda, the Tribes*, 54.

<sup>318</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

<sup>319</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.



Baghdad and provide essential services to the population. The SOI were able to fill this void, which inherently resulted in a more stable security environment.

Fifth, the SOI experience shows that co-opting surrogate security forces must be carefully implemented and the selection criteria for the supported local authorities must be stringent and the leadership vetted. In order to determine whom to support, one must acquire a vast amount of intelligence regarding that individual or group that the strategy targets, prior to moving forward with support. Simply paying and arming local militias may exacerbate the safe haven if the supported force is actually playing both sides of the conflict and simply acting as an opportunist.

Furthermore, and most importantly as witnessed in Iraq today, support must continue until the central government of that country can support the effort itself, or the strategy runs the risk of losing the fragile gains made. The strategy of employing surrogate security forces proved effective in the near term at denying AQI a sanctuary, but the prospects of long-term success require steadfast commitment from a foreign power, the local government, or both. Since the U.S withdrawal from Iraq in 2011, terrorist attacks have seen a resurgence that has not been witnessed since the height of AQI in 2007.

## VII. CONCLUSION

More than a decade after the 9/11 attacks, U.S. leadership continues to place a high priority on pursuing terrorists and denying the areas that provide sanctuary. However, evidence suggests that the United States' current emphasis on counterterrorism and irregular warfare may not be having the desired effect of eradicating terrorism. Most notably, Al Qaeda still exists, despite destroying their safe haven in Afghanistan in 2001 and killing Osama bin Laden in 2011, and the Al Qaeda phenomenon has spread to Iraq, the Arabian Peninsula, North Africa and the Horn of Africa. The persistence and growth of Al Qaeda suggests that a new approach is needed regarding safe havens and targeting leadership.

According to the President of the United States in the *2010 U.S. National Security Strategy*, the U.S. will “Deny Safe Havens and Strengthen At-Risk States: Wherever al-Qa’ida or its terrorist affiliates attempt to establish a safe haven—as they have in Yemen, Somalia, the Maghreb, and the Sahel—we will meet them with growing pressure.”<sup>320</sup> Given the task of denying terrorist safe havens, a complex question remains for USSOF: What strategy should USSOF use to counter terrorist safe havens?

This thesis has sought to answer this question by, first, elucidating the often ambiguous definition of terrorist safe havens, and highlighting the importance of an often overlooked variable of terrorist safe havens—demographics. The thesis then has analyzed the concept, strengths, and weaknesses of four distinct counterterrorist safe haven strategies, based on a comparison of historical case studies, in an effort to assess the validity of possible strategies for the United States and USSOF in particular.

First, this thesis looked at a decapitation strategy within safe havens by investigating the conditions that led up to the 1992 capture of Abimael Guzman Reynoso, the leader of the Shining Path in Peru, and the effects of the Peruvian forces in combating Shining Path insurgents and their safe haven. Second, this thesis analyzed a tactical containment strategy for a safe haven, along with the capture of key leaders, as presented

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<sup>320</sup> White House, *National Security Strategy*, 21.

by the Battle of Algiers between French and Arab insurgents. Third, this thesis analyzed a pseudo operations strategy, focusing on the Selous Scouts of Rhodesia, and analyzed the implementation of pseudo operations during the Rhodesian Civil War to counter two communist insurgencies and their demographic safe havens. Finally, this thesis investigated the strategy of co-opting surrogate security forces through the case of the Sons of Iraq within Anbar Province, Iraq, during the U.S led war. This case highlighted the successes and failures of surrogates providing security in ungoverned spaces.

## **A. KEY FINDINGS**

As seen in the case of the Shining Path, some key variables needed to exist for a decapitation strategy within a safe haven to be successful. Ultimately, the actions of the Shining Path itself led to the loss of popular support and their safe haven within the rural areas of Peru. This presented an opportunity for the Peruvian government to implement a counterinsurgency strategy that not only addressed grievances of the population, but also provided much needed intelligence, which in turn enabled leadership targeting and the capture of Guzman and key lieutenants. Garnering popular support of the indigenous population proved to be a critical precursor to Peru's decapitation strategy because it provided the government with invaluable intelligence that enabled strikes to degrade the terrorist network.

However, President Fujimori's strategy came at a cost to the democracy of Peru when he dissolved Congress in April 1992, and assumed a dictatorial role in governing the country.<sup>321</sup> Fujimori's decree provided him the authority to employ and direct the GEIN—special counterterrorism forces—where he saw fit in order to defeat the Shining Path. This singular ownership enabled the government to trample on the rights of Peruvian citizens, leading to atrocities and rampant corruption by both the government and military. These transgressions caused significant fissures in Peruvian society until new elections brought about reconciliation.

A containment strategy aims to quarantine the threat and then dismantle terrorist groups from within a specific area. Realizing the Casbah provided a natural safe haven

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<sup>321</sup> *State of Fear*.

for the FLN to recruit, train and educate their support base, the French sought to cut off the insurgency from the rest of its surroundings. Instituting a curfew and conducting military patrols in and around the Casbah allowed the French to quarantine and completely isolated the FLN within their safe haven. The containment of the Casbah put the French on the offensive and allowed them to determine the time and place of engagement. The strategy further permitted the paratroopers to mitigate the risk to French forces, based on improved intelligence, as well as minimize friendly and civilian casualties through a more targeted approach against FLN leadership, rather than through chance contact.

Although the containment strategy was tactically successful at pacifying the violence in Algiers in the near term, the French government eventually lost the support of its own people for a colonial occupation, ceding power to the Algerians. The lynchpin of enduring success again rested with the population, and the French government could not indefinitely contain the Algerian people.

The third strategy analyzed in this thesis was pseudo operations, which “indicates the use of organized teams which are disguised as guerrilla groups for the long- or short-term penetration of insurgent controlled areas.”<sup>322</sup> As described in Chapter VI, pseudo operators have been used to infiltrate terrorist safe havens and networks to garner actionable intelligence, conduct strikes, and sow distrust amongst terror groups. This strategy focuses on undermining a network from within and destroying the group’s operational capacity. Pseudo teams, comprised of “turned” insurgents who have been extensively vetted, provide a deep penetration strategy that is extremely useful for effectively targeting terrorist groups in safe havens. Pseudo operations are arguably the most effective strategy for countering a demographic safe haven, but the strategy is also the most complex to implement and sustain.

In the case of Rhodesia, gaining access to the demographic safe havens of ZANLA and ZIPRA guerrillas was a significant problem for Rhodesian security forces. Accessing the demographic sanctuaries in Rhodesia, therefore, became paramount for the

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<sup>322</sup> Cline, *Pseudo Operations and Counterinsurgency*, 1.

government to counter not only the guerrillas, but also the pervasive ideology that was sweeping through the rural African tribes. The Rhodesians realized that they needed to access the denied areas and the African tribal population; the Selous Scouts were the solution. The pseudo operators of the Selous Scouts provided the Rhodesians with a strategy to access demographically denied areas to help develop intelligence, direct strike operations, and disrupt the terrorist network from within.

The biggest strength of the pseudo operations strategy in Rhodesia was the Selous Scouts' ability to gather actionable intelligence on ZANLA and ZIPRA insurgents, which was completely absent prior to the implementation of the strategy. The combat effectiveness and lethality of the Selous Scouts was remarkable and devastating to the terrorist networks within and outside of Rhodesia. However, even though the strategy was extremely effective at targeting and killing ZANLA and ZIPRA terrorists, the Rhodesian government never achieved popular African tribal support to counter the spread of the insurgency. The most significant weakness of the Rhodesian pseudo operations strategy was not with the pseudo operations concept, but rather the government's insistence on attriting insurgents rather than engaging the population. This approach was tactically successful, but could not be implemented indefinitely while the Rhodesian government suffered sanctions and widespread disapproval from super powers like the United States.

The final strategy examined in this study was of co-opting surrogates. This strategy seeks to create an inhospitable place for terrorists by helping the local population and indigenous security forces directly and indirectly counter terrorist groups, mitigating the need for occupying forces to actively provide security for the area. At the root of the strategy is securing the support of the population; without popular support, neither the terrorist nor the counter-terrorist can be successful. As discussed in the SOI case study, this indirect approach to countering terrorist safe havens can take on two different forms: defensive and offensive. The defensive approach is one where U.S. forces are working in concert with indigenous security forces to not only counter threats to the government, but

also improve upon the underlying grievances that may have caused the insurgency.<sup>323</sup> The offensive form of this approach, according to political scientist Thomas Henriksen, “is far easier to execute than its defensive counterpart. It usually translates into a more limited and briefer military, political, and economic presence by U.S. armed forces.”<sup>324</sup> The offensive form was witnessed during the 1980’s when the U.S. supported the mujahedeen against the Soviet Union, the contras in Nicaragua in the 1980s and 1990s, and again in 2001 when a limited number of U.S. Special Forces supported the Northern Alliance in destroying the Taliban regime and Al Qaeda’s safe haven.<sup>325</sup>

The SOI strategy was a defensive approach that was remarkably successful but uneven; certain areas took longer to secure than others. The most critical factor in the success of the SOI was undoubtedly tribal buy-in; had there been an absence of tribal support, the strategy would have been doomed for failure and potentially created more problems for both the fledgling Iraqi government and U.S. forces. Much like the case of the Shining Path, AQI’s brutality towards the population of Al Anbar served as the catalyst that led to the demise of the terrorist group’s safe haven. This loss of popular support provided an opening for U.S. forces to exploit.

The strategy of employing surrogate security forces proved effective in the near term at denying AQI a sanctuary, but the prospects of long-term success require steadfast commitment from a foreign power, the local government, or both. Since the U.S. withdrawal from Iraq in 2011, terrorist attacks have seen a resurgence that has not been witnessed since the height of AQI in 2007.<sup>326</sup>

## **B. IMPLICATIONS FOR USSOF**

When developing a strategy to counter terrorist safe havens there is no one “silver bullet” for the problem. The individual strategies analyzed in this thesis all provide

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<sup>323</sup> Henriksen, *Afghanistan, Counterinsurgency*, 11.

<sup>324</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>325</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>326</sup> Jessica D. Lewis, *Al Qaeda in Iraq Resurgent: The Breaking Walls Campaign Part I, Middle East Security Report 14* (Washington, DC: Institute for the Study of War, 2013), 7, <http://www.understandingwar.org/report/al-qaeda-iraq-resurgent>.

potential options for USSOF to counter the complex problem of safe havens. However, based on the analysis of this thesis, the best strategy should be a combination and/or sequencing of the approaches analyzed in this study.

Specifically, our analysis found that in each case, the strengths of the insurgencies and the foundation for a successful safe haven was rooted in popular support. In Iraq and Peru, both AQI and Shining Path insurgents proved to be the most instrumental variable in their demise rather than the government's efforts. The loss of support from the population became the catalyst that enabled the successful decapitation strategy in Peru and the tribal uprising in Iraq. In Rhodesia the Selous Scouts were extremely successful in their ability to destroy the ZANLA and ZIPRA networks from within, but the strategy never addressed the grievances of African tribal population. Coupled with sanctions and a lack of international legitimacy, the Rhodesian government never had a chance of winning the peace in Rhodesia, no matter how many terrorists they killed. Likewise, the French containment of the Casbah proved tactically successful, but a lack of support from the people of France, as well as from Algerians, ultimately gave Algeria and the FLN a strategic victory.

These cases demonstrate that the importance of winning the population is the critical variable for long-term success in countering terrorist safe havens. However, given the debatable success of U.S. led efforts at nation building in Iraq and Afghanistan, the prospects for long-term involvement of U.S. forces to address aggrieved societies and rebuild governance are unlikely. The most successful case with regard to engaging and winning the population is the Peruvian government's denial of safe havens and their decapitation strategy. Ultimately, the government won the support of the population and used them to gain actionable intelligence. However, the Peruvians had to facilitate a national reconciliation and address grievances to achieve this success; they did this alone, not with the help of a foreign power.

Terrorist safe havens currently exist in both Iraq and Afghanistan, even though billions of dollars have been spent and hundreds of thousands of troops deployed to both countries. The strategy of nation building for the United States is currently not financially or politically feasible to combat safe havens. Therefore the strategies

presented here seek limited intervention, lower cost, tactical and operational options to address sanctuaries with a recommendation that host-nation governments, rather than the United States, respond to grievances.

All of the strategies analyzed in this thesis are currently viable for USSOF with the exception of pseudo operations. A pseudo operations strategy, as witnessed in Rhodesia, is perhaps the best strategy to combat demographic safe havens in both ungoverned and fully governed areas. However, this option is currently not viable to USSOF for a few reasons. First, USSOF is not structurally organized to support a pseudo operations capability because the current force structure is designed to employ teams, troops, and platoons to execute special operations, rather than small teams of one or two pseudo operators. Second, USSOF operators do not currently have a sufficient level of specialized training to conduct pseudo operations. In order to develop this skill set, USSOF would need the support of both the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the Central Intelligence Agency to develop, standardize, and implement a pseudo operator training course.

A containment strategy was useful to the French, who already had the material resources in Algeria and the political will to literally contain a limited geographic area. However, containment of a specific area solely by U.S. forces is not politically feasible today because it would undoubtedly be viewed as imperialistic and counter to American values and foreign policy. However, a containment strategy could be implemented with host nation forces, whose government had the political will, appropriate amount of troops, and material to contain the problem area. Host nation forces conducting a containment strategy would help mitigate the political risk of having American forces occupying a geographic area for both the U.S. and the host nation.

In Iraq, the SOI have been all but forgotten by the central government, and AQI enjoys a safe haven in Al Anbar province again today, where the United Nations estimates that 7,000 people have been killed in terrorist attacks in Iraq thus far in



2013.<sup>327</sup> During a meeting on November 1, 2013, “President Obama and embattled Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki agreed . . . to coordinate on reviving the ‘Sons of Iraq’ Sunni militias to counter a growing Al Qaeda insurgency as part of an overall effort to bolster the Shiite-led Baghdad government.”<sup>328</sup> Given that the fledgling Iraqi government is seeking U.S. assistance now, after advocating a withdrawal of U.S. forces in 2011, indicates that the situation in Iraq has severely deteriorated. A reinvigoration of the SOI strategy in Iraq could provide the Iraqi government the space needed to mount effective counterterrorism operations. However, the Iraqi’s will have to manage the strategy with limited U.S. assistance, as the likelihood of a return of U.S. troops to Iraq is extremely limited.

A decapitation strategy also is potentially useful for USSOF, but has limited results by itself. The case study of Peru shows that, although the government destroyed the Shining Path, there are still remnants of the terror group seeking to reassert itself today. The U.S. Government and military have made decapitation of insurgent and terrorist groups one of its main strategies in the fight against Al Qaeda, especially through its drone campaign and direct action raids. However, a decapitation strategy alone has limited strategic utility, as host nation authorities must address the grievances of the population to prevent the growth of the insurgency, as the population is the center of gravity.

Overall, the case studies demonstrate that each strategy offers tactical success in the short term but lacks long term sustainment. To have enduring success countering terrorist safe havens, the host nation must be willing to address underlying causes or grievances that instigated the insurgent movement and led the population to provide sanctuary. USSOF cannot fill this void alone. However, through a combination and sequencing of the strategies analyzed in this thesis, USSOF can assist host nation forces in degrading terrorist safe havens and providing space to facilitate their efforts to address long-term reforms to win the population.

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<sup>327</sup> Richard Sisk, “Obama Pushes for Return of Iraq’s Tribal Militias,” November 4, 2013, <http://www.military.com/daily-news/2013/11/04/obama-pushes-for-return-of-iraqs-tribal-militias.html?comp=700001075741&rank=2>.

<sup>328</sup> Sisk, “Obama Pushes for Return.”

In conclusion, perhaps the most viable strategy USSOF could pursue would be a combination of all the strategies in this thesis, with proper sequencing, and with each approach mutually supporting each other. Demographic safe havens arguably present the greatest obstacle to the current force structure of USSOF, because USSOF currently does not have a pseudo operations capability that could be implemented against terrorist safe havens. U.S. Army Special Forces in particular could find a true niche in conducting these operations; however, this would require targeted recruiting and training to effectively implement this strategy. USSF have been consistently engaged in the current war on terror, and the unique skill sets that USSF soldiers wield make them an excellent choice for spearheading pseudo operations. Coupled with interagency support, the United States could leverage the intelligence expertise, cultural knowledge, language capability, and tactical prowess of USSF to conduct pseudo operations.

Currently the focus of USSF has been Foreign Internal Defense (FID) and counter terrorism (CT); these missions are important, but typically focused on near term goals and tactical objectives. The employment of pseudo teams could develop deep penetration of terrorist safe havens and networks around the world and maximize the strategic utility of the force. Furthermore, pseudo operations could be used to infiltrate and target narco-terrorist groups that are closely tied with violent extremist groups.

Furthermore, the FID mission conducted by USSF is geared towards indigenous security and military forces that USSF could leverage for implementation of a decapitation strategy. USSF pseudo teams could infiltrate terrorist networks and their safe havens and gather actionable intelligence upon which the host nation security forces, or surrogates in under-governed or ungoverned countries, could act. This is an example of sequencing these different strategies to counter geographic and demographic safe havens and undermine terrorist and insurgent groups.

Overall, these strategies limit the overt U.S. presence in the area, and put the onus on the host nation's forces, or surrogate forces, to conduct kinetic operations. US strategic goals are achieved by denying terrorist safe havens at a fraction of the cost compared to large-scale intervention and nation building. In order to successfully achieve these strategies, the development and employment of USSF-led pseudo teams

would have to be carefully selected to ensure the proper training, manning, and authorities for the missions that the teams would conduct.

Perhaps the most important aspect of employing USSF pseudo teams is one of persistent engagement in the region. USSF need to be consistently embedded with host nation security forces as advisors and trainers, much like the current JCET training exchanges today, but on a more consistent and permanent basis. This persistent engagement would allow pseudo operatives access to denied areas where terrorist safe havens flourish for recruitment and intelligence collection. This engagement would also develop and nurture relationships with host nation strike forces that could be called upon to action targets similar to the Rhodesian model.

This approach is not novel. James Spies, for example, advocates a similar model where SOF pseudo teams and “turned terrorists” fix the enemy and regional USSOCOM CT forces finish the target.<sup>329</sup> Although this construct could prove valuable, host nation CT forces should be employed as much as possible to finish the targets, rather than unilateral USSOCOM CT forces. In some critical situations, the host nation will not have the capability; in others, an absence of trust may warrant U.S. unilateral action. Overall, this approach, combined with USSF and partner-nation collaboration, would be a potential solution to countering terrorist networks and their safe havens.

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<sup>329</sup> Spies, *Pseudo Operations*, 97.

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